African Bird Club

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African Bird Club

The African Bird Club aims to:

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

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Family	Europe & Africa: UK£21	Rest of the World: UK£23
Student	Europe & Africa: UK£10	Rest of the World: UK£12
Supporting	UK£30 minimum	
Life	UK£350	

To join or for further details please visit the ABC web site (where there are secure online payment facilities) or write to the Membership Secretary—see contact information below.

ABC Website

http://www.africanbirdclub.org

Photographers and artists

ABC is always looking for drawings and photos to publish in the Bulletin. If you are interested in contributing, please contact the Graphics Editor, Pete Leonard, pleonard@care4free.net

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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
Juvenile Little Bee-eaters
Merops pusillus
by Mark Anderson

Features

Club News

ABC at the 2006 British Birdwatching Fair

For the 13th consecutive year the Club mounted a stand at the British Birdwatching Fair, held as usual at the Anglian Water Birdwatching Centre, Rutland Water, in August 2006. With as many exhibitors as the site can accommodate and more visitors than ever each year, the Fair claims to be the biggest event of its kind in the world. Our stand was manned over the three days by relays of past and present ABC Council members, ensuring that the Club took full advantage of the opportunities offered. The stand provided a meeting point for members visiting the Fair and also gave ABC the chance to make the Club known to the many visitors who have not yet joined.

Figure 1. ABC Corporate Sponsors at the British Birdwatching Fair

Les firmes qui accordent leur soutien au ABC à la Foire ornithologique britannique

Many of our Corporate Sponsors were also present. **WildSounds**, who are our official bookseller and have supported the Club in numerous ways since the earliest days, had one of the largest stands with a display of all the latest birding and natural history books, wildlife guides on CD, cassette, CD-ROM and DVD and field-recording equipment. WildSounds is an Associate Sponsor of the Birdfair as is **Carl Zeiss Ltd**, who generously make a substantial contribution towards the cost of our stand each year. Zeiss has been a leader in precision optical engineering for over 150 years and certainly need no introduction to seasoned birders.

Two other exhibitors whose support for ABC goes back to our beginnings are **Wildwings**, specialists in birdwatching holidays and wildlife cruises who have also undertaken to support ABC conservation projects, and **Sunbird** whose full-colour advertisements for their birdwatching tours on the back covers of the autumn Bulletin have become a Bulletin feature in their own right.

Also prominent were **Birding Africa**. This company was established in 1997 by a group of Cape Town-based biologists, authors and conservationists anxious to share their enthusiasm for Africa's birds. They have been corporate sponsors of the Club for three years, co-host the African Birding Resources section of our website and operate the ABC Conservation Tours from which all profits go to our Conservation Fund.

Three companies who became ABC corporate sponsors at the Birdfair in 2005 were present again in 2006: **Avian Adventures**, who organise small-group birdwatching tours worldwide, including to seven countries in Africa; **Tropical Birding** who arrange set-departure and customised tours to tropical destinations in Africa, the Americas, Asia and Australia; and **Rockjumper Tours** who from their base in South Africa lead birding tours to 25 African countries as well as to several in Asia. Rockjumper have extended their sponsorship to finance a conservation project in the Kikuyu escarpment forests in Kenya.

Exhibiting for the first time this year, **Field Guides Birding Tours** are a long-established North American company who agreed to become ABC corporate sponsors earlier in 2006. They include a range of African destinations in their extensive worldwide programme.

The Birdfair also provides ABC with the opportunity to make new contacts amongst companies with an interest in Africa and we were very pleased to be able to welcome three new Corporate Sponsors at the 2006 fair: **Ornitholidays**, the oldest bird tour company in the world, with over 40 years experience of running their special brand of tours where the focus is equally on enjoying the birds and the holiday; **Sarus Bird Tours** who offer birdwatching tours ranging from fast-paced itineraries to relaxed single-location birding holidays; and **Meet us in Africa** a company specialising in birding and botany tours in South Africa.

ABC at the Malagasy Birdfair

The second Malagasy Birdfair took place on 27–29 October 2006, jointly organised by the BirdLife International Madagascar Programme and ASITY (the Malagasy League for the Protection of Birds), in collaboration with the Tsimbazaza Botanic and Zoological Park in Antananarivo. It followed the success of the first such fair in September 2005, which attracted over 6,000 visitors and stimulated great interest in Madagascar's unique avifauna and its conservation.

ASITY is ABC's partner organisation in Madagascar and, at the suggestion of our local representative Julien Ramanampamonjy (Honorary President of ASITY), we supported them in mounting an ABC stand at the Birdfair. The stand was largely financed by the subscriptions paid by ABC members in Madagascar under our local membership scheme, topped up by a small donation from the ABC Conservation Fund. Manned by a team of enthusiastic volunteers from amongst local ABC

Figure 2. The ABC representative in Madagascar, Julien Ramanampamonjy (right), welcomes the Director-General of the Ministry of Environment, Water and Forests and the Director for National Education and Scientific Research to the ABC stand at the Malagasy Birdfair in October 2006 (Julien Ramanampamonjy)

Le représentant du ABC à Madagascar, Julien Ramanampamonjy (à droite), accueille le Directeur général du Ministère de Environnement, Eaux et Forêts et le Directeur de l'Education nationale et de la Recherche scientifique au stand du Club à la Foire ornithologique malgache en octobre 2006 (Julien Ramanampamonjy)

members, the stand proved a great success with the public who once more flocked to the event. Julien had prepared a VCD of Malagasy birds and their songs and arranged several showings which attracted much interest. He and his colleagues also gave a number of talks and conducted walks around the grounds of the Tsimbazaza Park, and succeeded in attracting several new members for the Club.

Birding in Liberia

Given its recent turbulent history, Liberia is not a destination that many people would consider for a birding trip, but our ABC Representative there, Moses Massah, reports that the country is now accessible and he believes there is a need for experienced birders to visit in order to undertake surveys, particularly of up-country areas, to assess the situation after 15 years of conflict.

In 1999 Liberia was identified as the country with the greatest potential and highest priority for biodiversity conservation in humid West Africa. There are nine Important Bird Areas in the country and Moses notes that access to all them is feasible. However, the infrastructure is in poor condition—the further one travels from the capital the more difficult travel becomes—and hotels and restaurants in many areas do not meet international standards, so birders are advised to carry all necessary camping equipment. But, a motivated expedition prepared to experience a few hardships should be able to visit all the best areas.

Moses and colleagues from the Society for the Conservation of Nature of Liberia have managed to undertake bird surveys in several parts of the country since 2002 and although they have not added any new species to the national list, they have noted several interesting range extensions.

Club Membership

At the end of 2006 the Club had *c.*1,240 members. There are ABC members in 71 countries, including 36 countries in Africa, 22 in Europe and 14 elsewhere in the world.

Meetings Officer

The Club is seeking a Meetings Officer to join Council and take responsibility for organising the AGM in March and possibly one other UK meeting each year in conjunction with a regional bird club. The role involves booking venues, arranging speakers, organising projectors, catering etc, in collaboration with other members of Council. As a Council member, the person appointed would attend Council meetings, which take place three times a year, and be expected to contribute to the formulation of general Club policy. Anyone interested in this important role should contact Richard Webb by e-mail: chairman@africanbirdclub.org

New Turaco T-shirt

A new ABC T-shirt, featuring an image specially painted by Martin Woodcock of two perched Ross's Turacos *Musophaga rossae*, went on sale for the first time at the Club's 2007 AGM, held in Thetford in late March. The T-shirts are available in pale grey or pale green in a range of adult sizes (S, M, L, XL and XXL) and, for the first time, in a child's medium size. The Carmine Bee-eater T-shirt is still available but only while current stocks last. The full range of ABC goods, including the new T-shirt, can be seen at our online shop at www.africanbirdclub.org and in our catalogue produced each year with the second part of the Bulletin.

ABC Conservation Tour to Gabon: 3–20 October 2006

The seven tour participants met Michael Mills, Birding Africa's tour leader, at the Hotel Tropicana in Libreville, Gabon, for breakfast on 3 October 2006. Four of the party had spent much of the previous week with Michael in São Tomé and Príncipe and had still not dried out. The other three participants had arrived on the overnight flight from Paris. Rather than spend a day in Libreville, however, we all decided that we wanted to start the tour a day early.

After studying Reichenbach's Sunbirds *Anabathmis reichenbachii* in the hotel grounds, we set off on a long drive to Lopé National Park. We soon left Libreville's traffic behind and were heading on a metalled but potholed road towards our lunch stop at Ndjolé on the banks of the Ogooué River, where we found Rock Pratincole *Glareola nuchalis*, the striking Grey Pratincole *G. cinerea* and the first of many beautiful Black-bellied Seedcrackers *Pyrenestes ostrinus*. It also gave us the chance to sample Michael's regular lunch of tuna and mayonnaise on crackers for the first time, despite our being opposite an excellent auberge.

The roads became considerably worse after Ndjolé and a long drive in wet conditions meant that we arrived at Lopé after dark for the first of our three nights stay. The following morning we discovered the lodge to be sited on the Ogooué River with excellent views of savanna grasslands. We spent two very full days birding the grasslands and forest in Lopé National Park as well as the banks of the river. My particular favourites in this area were: Forbes's Plover *Charadrius forbesi*, Chocolate-backed Kingfisher *Halcyon badia*, Black Dwarf Hornbill *Tockus hartlaubi*, Dja River Warbler *Bradypterus grandis*, Violet-tailed Sunbird *Anthreptes aurantium* and Fiery-breasted Bush Shrike *Malaconotus cruentus*.

10 October was a long travelling day, to the small town of Léconi, in south-east Gabon and near the border with Congo. The next two days were spent birding the savanna grasslands which hold a number of species difficult to see elsewhere. Highlights were Finsch's Francolin *Francolinus finschi*, Congo Moor-Chat *Myrmecocichla tholloni*, Dambo Cisticola *Cisticola dambo*, Sousa's Shrike *Lanius souzae* and Black-chinned Weaver *Ploceus nigrimentus*.

Although marked as a red route on the map, the road from Léconi to

Figure 3. Participants on the ABC/Birding Africa Conservation Tour to Gabon in October 2006 viewing birds in the forest canopy (John Caddick)

Les participants du 'Voyage ornithologique pour la conservation' au Gabon, organisé par ABC/Birding Africa en octobre 2006, observant les oiseaux dans la canopée (John Caddick)

Makokou is anything but major. It is single track and badly worn over most of the route through some wonderful hardwood forests. We spent six nights in a modern hotel in Makokou overlooking the Ivindo River and very full days in the Ipassa Reserve, the Ivindo National Park and along the river itself. This area supports major tracts of primary forest that yielded two extremely obliging Black Guineafowl *Agelastes niger*, Yellow-throated Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx flavigularis*, Bare-cheeked Trogon *Apaloderma aequatoriale*, Rufous-sided Broadbill *Smithornis rufolateralis* and Bates's Paradise Flycatcher *Terpsiphone batesi*.

Evening trips along the Liboumba River gave us wonderful views of Spot-breasted Ibis *Bostrychia rara* as well as Bates's *Caprimulgus batesi* and Brown Nightjars *C. binotatus*. All too soon, on 15 October we made the long return journey to Libreville but still managed to see some new birds en route including Congo Serpent Eagle *Dryotriorchis spectabilis* and, for one lucky person, White-bellied Kingfisher *Alcedo leucogaster*.

The following morning, all but one of the party joined Michael in a tour extension to the south-west, around the oil town of Gamba. This was established by Shell in 1963 and is only accessible by air from Libreville. Following a visit to the Smithsonian Research Institute in Gamba, we took a fast speedboat to Setta Cama, a village on a coastal strip of sand between the Atlantic and the lagoon system. We stayed four nights at a lodge built with EU funding and managed by the local community. Large populations of Rosy Bee-eaters *Merops malimbicus* (we encountered a colony of 1,500 birds), a few Black-headed Bee-eaters *M. breweri*, good numbers of African River Martins *Pseudochelidon eurystoma* and Loango Weavers *Ploceus subpersonatus* were breeding at the lodge. A forest walk produced excellent views of two Plumed Guineafowl *Guttera plumifera*, a species which had proved elusive elsewhere. We returned to Libreville on 20 October after spending much of the day waiting at Gamba airport, which gave us the opportunity to relax and practice our photographic skills on a very obliging Long-legged Pipit *Anthus pallidiventris* and some nesting Carmelite Sunbirds *Chalcomitra fuliginosa*.

We all enjoyed our time in Gabon immensely and found the people very friendly. It is an excellent birdwatching destination, with some 400 species seen on this tour. In addition to birds, it has healthy populations of mammals, especially primates, is still heavily forested and there are huge areas of forest and lagoon systems with no road access. Few birdwatchers have travelled to Gabon possibly because it is an expensive country, but if you decide to visit you will not be disappointed.

This trip was the third ABC-sponsored Conservation Tour organised by Birding Africa. It continued the theme of visiting lesser known parts of Africa with a view to finding little-known species. In so doing, we are able to generate funds for conservation, as Birding Africa donates a share of the profits from these tours. You can find out more about Gabon and its birds by visiting www.africanbirdclub.org/countries/Gabon/introduction.html and regular visits to the home page at www.africanbirdclub.org will give you information about future Conservation Tour plans.

Contributed by John Caddick

ABC Website

Since September 2003, the ABC website has been used for the payment of membership subscriptions, for purchasing Club merchandise, Bulletins and trip reports, and for making donations to the Conservation Fund. Recently, the opportunity for our Corporate Sponsors to pay their annual subscription has been added, as well as a package of improvements to aid navigation and simplify the process for the user. Payment is made via a secure payment facility with a credit card, and both Visa and Mastercard can be accepted.

In just over three years, more than UK£20,000 of subscription payments, sales orders and donations have been made through the website and the amount has increased annually. It is especially useful for payments from outside the UK. You can find this option at our website at www.africanbirdclub.org by following the *online shop* or *join now* links. Please consider this method of pay-

ment in the future, if you have not been using it already.

From the home page, you will also find a link *need advice or to buy books or CDs*. This will take you to a list of publications and recordings for each country in Africa, from where you can place an order directly with WildSounds, the Club's official bookseller. WildSounds pays the Club a percentage of each sale as a donation to the Conservation Fund.

Several thousand pounds of orders were placed this way in 2006, generating substantial funds for conservation. You may also have noticed that we have occasionally advertised a new book or special promotion on the home page. If you click on the picture, you will go straight to WildSounds' website to order this item directly.

As well as facilitating such financial transactions, the website continues to be a popular source of photographs and information about African birds. New photographs and information are always welcome and can be sent to info@africanbirdclub.org or you can add your own photographs by following the links to *African Bird Images*.

Contributed by John Caddick

Credit card payments—customer verification

Many members pay their subscriptions, make donations and purchase sales items by credit card, either via the website or by mail order. Since early 2006, we have been using an electronic payment facility for processing these transactions, which has proved reliable and efficient. It is also cost-effective as the bank charges are less than for paper transactions. In order to use electronic processing, we require you to send your Customer Verification Code (CVC) with your other credit card details. Your CVC code comprises the final three digits in the signature strip on the back of your card. The website and our literature have been modified to reflect the change which will improve transaction security as well as reducing costs.

Contributed by John Caddick

Bill Quantrill

Bill Quantrill stood down at this year's AGM after 11 years as a Council member. Bill's contribution to the Club cannot be overstated as without his contribution ABC would unquestionably not be where it is today. Bill took over as Secretary in 1996 and went on to become Membership Secretary (unquestionably the most time-consuming job on Council). He even had a short spell as Treasurer when the previous incumbent had to resign at short notice.This role has involved welcoming new members, keeping track of subscription payments, maintaining the membership database and organising Bulletin distribution as well as the sale of back issues).

Bill was also the driving force in setting up local membership and local representative schemes around Africa, and has done more than any other person to find ways of making ABC accessible to all. In addition, he has undertaken a number of other tasks, including editing the Club News section of the Bulletin, representing the Club at the PAOC in Tunisia and has spoken on behalf of the Club at the annual meeting of the Scottish Ornithologists' Club. He has been ever-present at the annual Rutland Bird Fairs and AGMs, and is proud to have never missed a Council meeting during his tenure on Council, an outstanding record.

His attention to detail was invaluable during his time as Secretary and in establishing and managing the current membership database. I cannot thank Bill enough for his contribution to the Club and wish him, and Rowena, every success for the future. It seems, however, that the ABC's loss is the BTO's gain, so we can expect the BTO to go from strength to strength in Wiltshire, in future years. Alan Williams will be taking over from Bill as Membership Officer and inherits an extremely well-run system. Alan was previously Club Treasurer in 2000–04.

Richard Webb

Figure 4. Bill Quantrill during his previous life as Britain's ambassador in Cameroon where he was a founder member of the Cameroon Ornithological Club

Bill Quantrill quand il était ambassadeur britannique au Cameroun où il fut un des membres fondateurs du Club ornithologique du Cameroun

I would like to pay my own personal tribute to Bill, whose total commitment and reliability were absolutely invaluable to me while I was Chairman. The Club and I are both deeply indebted to him.

Martin Woodcock

Moira Hargreaves

Moira is also standing down from Council this year after being Sales Officer for as long as I can remember. She has also made an immense contribution to the Club, particularly at the annual Rutland Bird Fair where she has been the face of ABC sales and an outstanding raffle ticket seller, as many members can vouch. Her commitment to the Club, in sometimes difficult circumstances, has been outstanding and I am extremely grateful for her contribution. Bev Randall has agreed to take on the Sales Officer role in an ex-officio capacity.

Richard Webb

Expedition Award 2006

In 2006 the Club has committed a total of UK£7,500 from the Conservation Fund towards projects in Africa. The 2006 Expedition Award was given to Wanyoike Wamiti, Henry Ndithia and Chege Kariuki, of the Department of Ornithology, National Museums of Kenya, for an expedition to the Namanga Hills Forest in Kenya. The applicants will assess the conservation status of the dry montane forest and conduct a basic avifaunal inventory. They will aim to reconfirm the presence of species such as Stripe-cheeked Greenbul *Andropadus milanjensis*, Oriole Finch *Linurgus olivaceus* and Pale-breasted Illadopsis *Illadopsis rufipennis*. They also hope to assess the forest's importance for Palearctic migrants and to establish whether Abbott's Starlings *Pholia femoralis* use the forest en route between the central Kenyan highland forests and Mount Kilimanjaro.

Other awards

Details were provided in *Bull. ABC* 13: 128–129 of four awards, but the following applicants were notified of their awards in the latter half of 2006.

- Lassana Bagayogo, of Groupe Nature, for an inventory/census of rare birds and of biotopes and wetlands at Niono, Mali (UK£900).
- Julius Kimani for a study in the Kereita Hills, on the Kikuyu escarpment of Kenya. This was kindly sponsored by Rockjumper Tours (UK£750).
- Eric Sande of Makerere University in Kampala for a survey of Nahan's Francolin *Francolinus nahani* in Kibale National Park and Semliki Valley, western Uganda (UK£550). This francolin is a locally distributed in DR Congo and west and south-central Uganda.
- Donella Young, of the Avian Demography Unit in Cape Town, South Africa, for help with funding the Co-ordinated Avifaunal Road Count (CAR) project. This uses volunteers to obtain information on the abundance of large terrestrial bird along roads throughout South Africa (UK£800).
- Josephine Nzilani and Geoffrey Mwangi, of the Department of Ornithology, National Museums of Kenya, to research the ecology and conservation of Jackson's Widowbird *Euplectes jacksoni* in highland grasslands of Kenya (UK£850).
- Savanna Conservation, in Nigeria, for baseline monitoring of vultures at Yankari Game Reserve, Nigeria (UK£850). The applicant intends to study vultures over a 12-month period in the reserve and establish the species present and their populations.
- Tracking the Northern Bald Ibis *Geronticus eremita* that have moved from their breeding grounds in Syria via Yemen to Ethiopia. Funding from ABC, sponsored by Wildwings, will help fund staff of the Ethiopian Wildlife & Natural History Society involved in the tracking programme (UK£270).
- Achilles Byaruhanga, of Nature Uganda and Makerere University, for small grants to students undertaking bird-related projects (UK£100). This was kindly sponsored by Abacus.
- Purchase of a copy of the Uganda Atlas for Uganda Bird Guides, thanks to Christine Dranzoa and Trish Cavell (UK£40).

If the Spotted Ground Thrush *Zoothera guttata* project (see *Bull. ABC* 13: 129) goes ahead, ABC has also undertaken to help fund Rebecca van de Griend undertake research into the effect of elephants on the habitat of the thrush in the Arabuko-Sokoke Forest, Kenya.

Future awards

Once funds permit, the Club also intends to support an application by Jeremiah Kyomo to study endemics in the Udivunda Mountains in Tanzania, as well as support a programme operated by the Mauritius Wildlife Foundation to conserve Mauritius Olive White-eye *Zosterops chloronothos*, and a project on Grey Parrots *Psittacus erithacus* in Kakamega Forest, Kenya. Ideally the methodology for the parrot study drawn up by Irene Madindou and Ronald Mulwa should be repeatable in parts of its range where it is commoner than in Kakamega.

We have also received an application from Rufus Idris, in Nigeria, to examine the impacts of

oil spillage and gas flares on the populations and distribution of birds in the Niger Delta. He and two colleagues also hope to generate awareness of any impacts.

Taita Falcon survey

In 2005 ABC part-funded a survey of Taita Falcons *Falco fasciinucha* in South Africa which was deferred for unavoidable reasons. In September 2006 the survey was conducted by Dr Andrew Jenkins, Anthony van Zyl, Lucia Rodrigues *et al.* from the Western Cape Raptor Research Programme.

Andrew Jenkins reported: 'In all, 12 people were involved as participants in the survey from 17 September to 1 October, and between us we accumulated 58 person-days of effort at nearly 40 observation points . . . situated immediately above or below a minimum 50 potential nest cliffs, spread along *c.*40 km of the escarpment from Scotland Hill in the south to Chedle in the north, and including the vast complexity of the Blyde River canyon. Obviously, we fell way short of covering all available habitat, and were forced to concentrate on sites deemed most likely to hold Taita pairs based on observations made over the last 10–15 years. We also did two helicopter-based survey flights, both centred on the canyon area, and one drop-off session with three teams of two positioned at strategic points in the area to conduct observations. The latter yielded key observations that led to the finding of a fourth nest. We owe a huge debt to Lt. Col. Willie van Aswegen, Capt. Paul Bester and 19th Squadron, Hoedspruit, for their considerable help and cooperation. From a population of two known sites, occupied by pairs and each with a history of successful breeding going back to the late 80s or early 90s, we confirmed these as being current and added another two sites. Doubling the known population for South Africa is no small achievement, though we fell tantalisingly short of my minimum target of five pairs. In addition, we also located three active Peregrine *Falco peregrinus* sites (and noted that at least three sites occupied by Peregrines at least until the mid-90s are now occupied by Lanners *F. biarmicus*), 12 Lanner sites, five Verreaux's Eagle *Aquila verreauxii* sites, three Black Stork *Ciconia nigra* sites, five Jackal Buzzard *Buteo rufofuscus* sites and two White-necked Raven *Corvus albicollis* sites.'

Taita Falcon / Faucon taita *Falco fasciinucha* (Dalena Mostert)

News on previous awards

Reports have been received from: Hugh Doulton on the Comores expedition; Friends of Mauritian Wildlife on the **Mauritius Fody** *Foudia rubra* translocation work; and Phil McGowan concerning the 2004 **Djibouti Francolin** *Francolinus ochropectus* work. In 2004 much felling of junipers *Juniperus* was noted in Djibouti and only 105–124 adult Djibouti Francolins were found. More recent work paints a rosier picture for both the juniper forests and francolin. Juniper nursery enclosures are being established and anyone wishing to contribute to a carbon-offset scheme could help sponsor the nurseries.

Shelley's Crimsonwing—a research challenge

A study of the little-known Shelley's Crimsonwing *Cryptospiza shelleyi* is long overdue. This large crimsonwing is an uncommon to rare endemic of montane forests in the Albertine Rift, where it inhabits moist understorey, low second growth adjacent to forests and bamboo thickets. Because of its restricted global range it is classified as Vulnerable. Simon Espley is offering funding via ABC towards a research project by ornithologists in DR Congo, Uganda, Rwanda or Burundi, or indeed from elsewhere, provided a training element for local people is included. If you are interested in applying for funds to study Shelley's Crimsonwing, please contact the Conservation Officer, Steph Tyler, via conservation@africanbirdclub.org

Africa Round-up

African Skimmers / Becs-en-ciseaux d'Afrique *Rynchops flavirostris* (Phil Palmer)

General

Red List changes of African birds

BirdLife International's annual review of the IUCN Red List suggests that the total number of species in Africa that are threatened with extinction is now 230, four fewer than in 2005. A total of 110 species is now considered to be Near Threatened, whilst 29 species are considered Critically Endangered, with Uluguru Bush-shrike *Malaconotus alius* having been added to this category in 2006. Loveridge's Sunbird *Nectarinia loveridgei*, also only found in the Uluguru Mountains, has been upgraded to Endangered. On the plus side, Seychelles Fody *Foudia sechellarum* has been down-listed from Vulnerable to Near Threatened following the recent significant increase to its population.

Source: BirdLife Newsletter Africa/Afrique *8(2), pp 1–2*

Protection for African migrants

Six species that occur in Africa have been approved for up-listing under the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals. Madagascar Squacco Heron *Ardeola idae*, Red Knot *Calidris canutus*, Basra Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus griseldis* and Spotted Ground-thrush *Zoothera guttata* were added to Appendix I, and Rock Pratincole *Glareola nuchalis* and African Skimmer *Rynchops flavirostris* have been added to Appendix 2.

Source: BirdLife Newsletter Africa/Afrique *8(2), pp 13–14*

Recommendations to stop unsustainable Grey Parrot trade

Although currently categorised as a species of Least Concern, the Grey Parrot *Psittacus erithacus* is declining in no fewer than 15 of the 23 countries where it occurs. With the continuing threats from unsustainable trapping for the international bird trade and habitat loss, the species may warrant upgrading to Near Threatened. According to CITES, the international convention governing trade in threatened species, a total of 359,000 wild parrots was caught and sold in 1994–2003. These are official figures and represent minimum numbers. There is also a high level of illegal trade in many countries. Given these concerns, BirdLife has recently made the following recommendations: suspension of international trade in wild Grey Parrots until an appropriate sustainable level has been identified; and establishment of systematic population monitoring and scientifically justified export quotas in all major exporting states including monitoring systems at IBAs where Grey Parrots occur. CITES has recommended a two-year ban from January 2007 on exports from Guinea, Sierra Leone, Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire, where the distinctive subspecies *timneh* (which may be a species) occurs, and from Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea, where the more widespread nominate form occurs. Only Congo-Brazzaville and DR Congo should be permitted to continue exporting Grey Parrots, though their quotas should be halved to 4,000 and 5,000 birds respectively.

Sources: BirdLife Newsletter Africa/Afrique *8(2), p 12 and www.birdlife.org*

New study on bulbul systematics

A molecular study reconstructing a phylogenetic hypothesis for the bulbuls Pycnonotidae, conducted by Robert Moyle and Ben Marks, identified three basal lineages: a large African clade, a large Asian clade that also included African *Pycnonotus* species, and—curiously—the mono-

Common Bulbul / Bulbul des jardins *Pycnonotus barbatus* (Martin Goodey)

typic African genus *Calyptocichla* (Golden Greenbul). The genus *Pycnonotus* proved to be polyphyletic because three Asian species are highly divergent from the others and are sister to all other Asian taxa. Within the African clade, three subclades were evident: (1) *Phyllastrephus*, (2) *Thescelocichla* and *Chlorocichla*, with *Baeopogon* and *Bleda*, and (3) *Criniger* and *Andropadus*. The African genus *Nicator* lies outside the bulbul assemblage.

Source: Mol. Phyl. & Evol. *40, pp 687–695*

Sassi's Olive Greenbul is not a species?

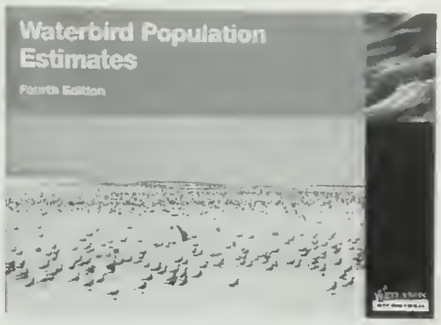
Lincoln Fishpool has concluded, on the basis of examining 40 of the extant 44 specimens of Sassi's Olive Greenbul *Phyllastrephus lorenzi* in museums around the world, that it is not a valid species. *P. lorenzi* is known only from montane forests in eastern DR Congo. He suggests that it should be considered synonymous with the widespread Icterine Greenbul *P. icterinus*, perhaps representing a melanic morph. There are previous instances of melanic morphs of greenbuls having been considered different species too.

Source: Bull. Br. Ornithol. Cl. *126, pp 310–323*

A new *Batis* in the Eastern Arc Mountains

Jon Fjeldså and colleagues have found that the Forest Batis *Batis mixta* which is fairly common throughout the Eastern Arc Mountains of Tanzania shows a marked change in morphology (in as much as any *Batis* spp. are markedly different!) in the centre of its range. Further genetic studies have shown that the south-western populations should be classified as a different and new species, and they propose the name *Batis crypta* for this. The authors further suggest that the form *reichenowi* be retained as a race of *B. mixta*, also based on molecular studies.

Source: J. Ornithol. *147, pp 578–590*



Waterbird Population Estimates fourth edition

The fourth edition of Waterbird Population Estimates is available now and provides a comprehensive update on information last provided in 2002, summarising population data for 878 waterbird species. This publication, by Wetlands International, provides the global standard in presenting estimates of the numbers and trends of waterbird populations throughout the world. It is available from the Natural History Book Service (www.nhbs.co.uk).

Source: Wetlands International press release January 2007

North Africa

Reedbed-frequenting passerines of Souss Massa National Park

A study of the migration and overwintering of reedbed-frequenting passerines conducted in 1989–2000 in Souss Massa National Park, in southern Morocco, garnered interesting data on seven species. Two species wintered in the lower Oued Massa Valley: Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti* and Bluethroat *Luscinia svecica* of the race *namnetum*, whilst five only used the site, the last permanent wetland on the Atlantic coast at the northern edge of the Sahara desert, on passage: Bluethroat *L. svecica* of the race *cyanecula* (uncommon but regular), Savi's Warbler *Locustella luscinioides* and Grasshopper Warbler *L. naevia* (both rare and irregular), Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus* (uncommon), Sedge Warbler *A. schoenobaenus* (abundant on northbound migration, from late January–early February, but rare in autumn) and Eurasian Reed Warbler *A. scirpaceus* with relatively long wings (65.6 ±0.1 mm) (abundant). The site also holds a breeding population of Eurasian Reed Warblers with relatively short wings (61.5 ± 0.2 mm), which returns much earlier from its African wintering grounds than the European population of long-winged birds, arriving already in mid February, with some as early as late January.

Source: Alauda *74, pp 429–440*

Libyan surveys

Hichem Azafzaf, ABC's representative in Tunisia, has contacted us concerning the results of two UNEP-backed surveys undertaken in Libya during 2006, in which he participated. The first mission took place in January and consisted of a midwinter waterfowl census designed to evaluate the status of any wetlands of international importance in the country and to search for Slender-billed Curlew *Numenius tenuirostris*, amongst other objectives. The team was unfortunately unsuccessful in the latter goal, but did count over 52,000 waterbirds and made a number of avifaunal observations of some interest. The second survey occurred in August and was designed to make the first detailed report on the status of the breeding population of Lesser Crested Tern *Sterna bengalensis* in Libya since a similar census in 1993. Libya remains the only significant breeding ground for this species in the Mediterranean Basin. The team was able to ascertain that the tern's population appears to be stable but was unable to confirm the presence of any new breeding sites, though it remains possible that a significant breeding colony is located at or near

Bluethroat / Gorgebleu à miroir *Luscinia svecica* (Stein Nilsen)

Benghazi Lake. Both surveys were the result of collaboration between the RAC/SPA, the Environment General Authority (EGA) of Libya and a group of international consultants, and were supported by a variety of organisations (including Wetlands International).

Source: Hichem Azafzaf in litt. *January 2007*

West & Central Africa

Guinea designates Africa's first vulture sanctuary

The Republic of Guinea has designated *c.*450,000 ha in the Fouta Djalon highlands as a specially protected area for vultures. The region holds a significant proportion of West Africa's vultures. International conservation organisations have been working with local NGO Guinée Écologie on a regional West African vulture conservation project aimed at stabilising the dwindling vulture populations in rural refuges and helping numbers recover.

Source: www.birdlife.org

Award to protect picathartes in Sierra Leone

BirdLife International has been selected by the Disney Wildlife Conservation Fund for a US$37,300 award for two of its globally threatened species projects, one of which is in West Africa. Some US$19,900 has been awarded to protect one of the continent's most enigmatic birds, the White-necked Picathartes *Picathartes gymnocephalus* in Sierra Leone. BirdLife was selected from more than 240 applications reviewed by scientists, veterinarians and other animal experts.

Source: *www.birdlife.org/news/news/2006/07/disney.html*

Northern Wheatears cross Atlantic Ocean in one go

Northern Wheatears *Oenanthe oenanthe* of the race *leucorhoa*, which breed in west Greenland and Canada, may reach their wintering grounds in West Africa in a single direct, transatlantic flight of more than 4,000 km.

Dwarf Olive Ibis / Ibis de Bocage *Bostrychia bocagei* (Nik Borrow/Birdquest)

This has been concluded on the basis of analyses of their wing-lengths, body weights and timing of departure.

Source: Condor *108, pp 446–451*

Awards for endangered species in Cameroon and São Tomé

Funds raised by the Birdfair at Rutland Water in the UK in conjunction with the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (BirdLife partner in the UK) have been allocated to Innocent Ndong Bass (Bamenda Highlands Forest Project), to undertake surveys of Bannerman's Turaco *Tauraco bannermani* and Banded Wattle-eye *Platysteira laticincta*, both considered Endangered, in Cameroon, and to Wetlands International and the Ministry of the Environment of São Tomé, to aid research and conservation of the Critically Endangered Dwarf Olive Ibis *Bostrychia bocagei* in São Tomé.

Source: *www.birdlife.org/print.html*

Itombwe Mountains, DR Congo

The Itombwe Mountains is the richest single forest area for birds in Africa. Some 563 species are known from the forest including two Endangered species, Congo Bay-owl *Phodilus prigoginei* and Itombwe Nightjar *Caprimulgus prigoginei*, which are only known from this area, along with several Vulnerable species. Recent evidence suggests that the area is coming under increasing pressure from human activities, with political instability and an influx of people displaced from other areas adding to the threats. Although some parts are gazetted as Forest Conservation areas there is inadequate protection on the ground and the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) and the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) are currently aiming to obtain full protection for the site.

Source: BirdLife Newsletter Africa/Afrique *8(2), pp 6–7*

Malimbus

The latest issue (vol. 28, part 2) of *Malimbus*, published in September 2006, contains articles on Avifaunal and environmental changes on the campus of the University of Ghana, Legon, between the 1960s and 2004 (Grimes), Social interactions, moult and pre-migratory fattening among Yellow Wagtails *Motacilla flava* in the Nigerian Sahel (Bell), Biometrics of Red-billed Hornbill *Tockus erythrorhynchus* during the breeding period in Senegal (Diop), The birds of Mbam and Djerem National Park, Cameroon (Bobo *et al.*), The birds of Banco National Park and Anguédédou Forest Reserve, Côte d'Ivoire (Lachenaud) and Bird diversity in Nyassang Forest Park, The Gambia (Ballantyne). Summaries of each article, in English and French, can be found on the West African Ornithological Society's website: http://malimbus.free.fr.

Source: *P. W. P. Browne* in litt. *November 2006*

Atlantic Islands

News on threatened wader hotspot in Azores

Construction work is continuing at the most famous wader locality in the Azores, the quarry at Cabo da Praia on Terceira. The good news, however, is that this should not destroy the tidal pools on the south side of the site that are beneficial to birds. The Environmental Impact Assessment recommends work to improve the ecological value of these areas. The

other well-known wader pool on Terceira, Praia da Vitoria, has been extended and is expected to attract many American waders in autumn.

Source: Birding World *19, p 234*

Attractive song stimulates female Island Canaries

Research undertaken by scientists from the University of London, UK, and the Max Planck Institute for Ornithology, in Germany, proved that female Island Canaries *Serinus canaria* build bigger nests and lay larger eggs if they find a male's song attractive.

Source: Ethology *112, p 554*

Island Canary / Serin des Canaries *Serinus canaria* (Phil Palmer)

East Africa

New nesting sites for Crab Plover

Giuseppe De Marchi and colleagues from Milan and Pavia Universities surveyed 90 islands in the Dahlak and Howakil archipelagos off the coast of Eritrea, in 2002–04, and found an estimated 5,000–6,000 pairs of Crab Plovers *Dromas ardeola*. This finding accounts for some of the 'missing' colonies, but there are still sites to be discovered, given an estimated 60,000–80,000 birds in the wintering areas. It is thought likely that other sites remain to be discovered in southern Eritrea, Sudan and Somalia. Central Eritrea also accommodates 4,800–6,500 wintering birds.

Source: Ibis *148, pp 753–764*

Bald Ibis tracked to wintering grounds in Ethiopia

The three Northern Bald Ibises *Geronticus eremita* that were satellite-tagged in Syria in 2006 have been tracked to the highlands of Ethiopia, in which country the species was last recorded in 1977. Thirteen birds, including two breeding pairs, six juveniles and three subadults, left the breeding site at Palmyra, Syria, in July. The three tagged adults arrived in Ethiopia in August, after having made a stopover in Yemen. The trio plus a fourth adult were found by Ethiopian conservationists in early October at a remote site difficult of access, which may explain why the species went unrecorded for almost 30 years. A satellite map can be found at the following site: www.rspb.org.uk/tracking/northern_bald_ibis.asp

Source: *www.birdlife.org*

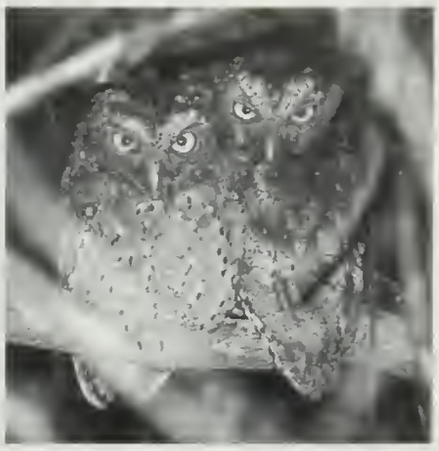
Short-toed Snake Eagles taking eastern Mediterranean route monitored

Short-toed Snake Eagles *Circaetus gallicus*, fitted with satellite transmitters in Israel in 2006, have been reported wintering in Sudan. Their migration route will be placed on the internet. This is the first time that Short-toed Snake Eagles taking the East Mediterranean route have been monitored.

Source: Sameh Darawshi *in litt. to AfricanBirding, November 2006*

Awards for endangered species in East Africa

Funds raised by the Birdfair at Rutland Water in the UK in conjunction with the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (BirdLife partner in the UK) were allocated to Nickson Otieno, Kenya, to undertake surveys of the Critically Endangered Taita Thrush *Turdus helleri*, to Claudien Nsagabasani, Rwanda, to carry out analyses of seasonal patterns of distribution of Grauer's Rush Warbler *Bradypterus graueri* (Endangered) in Volcanoes National Park, to A Rocha Kenya and the National Museums of Kenya to survey Dakatcha woodland north of the Sabaki River for Sokoke Scops Owl *Otus ireneae* and Clark's Weaver *Ploceus golandi* (both Endangered), and to Ghebre Medhani, Asmara, to search for wintering Northern Bald Ibis *Geronticus eremita* (Critically Endangered) in Eritrea.



Sokoke Scops Owl / Petit-duc d'Irène *Otus ireneae* (Pete Leonard)

Source: www.birdlife.org

Degazettement threatens Mabira Forest

Alarming news has reached us concerning the government of Uganda's plans to degazette several national forests for agriculture. This includes Mabira Forest, a tropical hardwood forest with very high bird diversity. One-quarter of the forest, over 7,000 ha, would be handed over to a private investor for sugar cane production (the latter already puts significant pressure on the forest as it completely surrounds it). A petition to save Mabira can be signed at www.savemabira.petitiontime.com/

Source: *save_mabira@yahoo.com* in litt. *September 2006*

Conservation in Tanzania

A collaborative project between the Wildlife Conservation Society of Tanzania (WCST) and the Field Museum of Natural History, in Chicago, is undertaking work to review the population status of threatened species such as Long-billed Tailorbird *Apalis moreaui*, Amani Sunbird *Anthreptes pallidigaster* and Banded Green Sunbird *A. rubritorques*, in the Amani Nature Reserve in the Usambara Mountains.

Other collaborative projects will monitor the conservation status of other threatened species including the Critically Endangered Uluguru Bush-shrike *Malaconotus alius*. The population of the shrike was estimated at 1,200 during a survey of the 84 km^2 Uluguru Forest Reserve and an adjacent unprotected area in 1999–2000. With agriculture encroaching on the unprotected area, WCST aims to carry out another assessment in 2006 with support from the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF). A census in 2000 estimated that between 21,000 and 166,00 Loveridge's Sunbird *Nectarinia loveridgei* still occur in the Ulugurus, but the species has been upgraded to Endangered on the basis of its small range, at three locations, within a 250-km^2 area where the habitat is being degraded. It is hoped that habitat can be conserved through the WCST/DOF-BirdLife Capacity Building project, by actively involving local communities in the management of the forest.

Source: BirdLife Newsletter Africa/Afrique *8(2), pp 5 & 7–8*

Indian Ocean islands

Seychelles Magpie-robins reach record high

Seychelles Magpie-robins *Copsychus sechellarum* have reached a record high of 178 individuals: 82 on Fregate, 46 on Cousin, 32 on Cousine and 18 on Aride. As a result, the species was downlisted from Critically Endangered to Endangered in 2005. The Seychelles Magpie-robin Recovery Team (SMART) is shortly to consider approving translocations to Denis Island.

Seychelles Magpie-robin / Shama des Seychelles *Copsychus sechellarum* (Martin Goodey)

Source: World Birdwatch *28(3), p 3*

Spectacular rediscovery of Madagascar Pochard

Madagascar's rarest endemic bird, the Madagascar Pochard *Aythya innotata*, a diving duck last sighted at Lake Alaotra in 1991 and feared 'Possibly Extinct', was rediscovered on 1 November 2006 during an ornithological survey in northern Madagascar. Field biologists from The Peregrine Fund Madagascar Project found nine adults and four recently hatched young on a remote lake. Further visits to the site in November–December led the researchers to estimate that up to 20 adults and 7–9 young may be present. For additional details see www.peregrinefund.org and www.birdlife.org. An article on this spectacular rediscovery will appear in the next *Bull. ABC*.

Sources: Lily-Arison Rene de Roland in litt. *December 2006, Glyn Young* in litt. *January 2007*

Project to save Seychelles Paradise Flycatcher

A three-year project has been launched to save the Seychelles Paradise Flycatcher *Terpsiphone corvina*, the last Critically Endangered endemic bird species in the archipelago. In recent years, the threat status of five other endemics (Seychelles Magpie-robin *Copsychus sechellarum*, Seychelles Warbler *Acrocephalus sechellensis*, Seychelles White-eye *Zosterops modestus*, Seychelles Fody *Foudia sechellarum* and Seychelles Scops Owl *Otus insularis*) have all improved, due to action by several organisations, but the remaining 200 Seychelles Paradise Flycatchers are subject to increasing pressures. The species was once found on islands across the archipelago, but today the breeding population is confined to La Digue. The project, funded by the UK government's Darwin Initiative, will work closely with local people on La Digue, to ensure measures put in place to protect the birds meet with their approval.

Source: www.birdlife.org

Réunion Cuckoo-shrike breeding success

Control of predatory rats and cats has led to four out of five pairs of the Endangered Réunion Cuckoo-shrike *Coracina newtoni* successfully rearing young in La Roche Écrite Nature Reserve, Réunion, compared to just two out of six pairs raising young at a nearby site without control. Predator control is a key recommendation of an action plan to protect the species. The population of Réunion Cuckoo-shrike, which remained fairly constant at *c.*120 pairs during the 1970s–90s, has been declining over the last decade and is currently estimated at fewer than 50 pairs, occupying a patch of montane forest in the north of the island.

Source: World Birdwatch *28(3), p 8*

Southern Africa

Cape Gannets back

In a previous Africa Round-up (*Bull. ABC* 13: 122) we reported that South Africa's famous Cape Gannet *Sula capensis* colony at Penguin (or Bird) Island off Lambert's Bay, Western Cape, was completely deserted by the second week of November 2005 due to predation by Cape Fur Seals *Arctocephalus pusillus*. In early August 2006, volunteers patrolling the island to keep the seals away reported that over 10,000 Cape Gannets had returned, with more still arriving.

Source: capebirdnet August 2006

Satellite-tracked Greater Spotted Eagles

Of six adult Greater Spotted Eagles *Aquila clanga* fitted with transmitters in Poland in recent years, four have passed the northern winter of 2006–07 in sub-Saharan Africa: two in Sudan, one in the eastern Caprivi strip, Namibia, and one in north-

eastern Botswana and Zimbabwe. The latter two are apparently hybrid *A. pomarina* × *clanga*, which migrated as would Lesser Spotted Eagles *A. pomarina*. Observers in Africa should now be aware that there are hybrids wintering far south of the equator.

Source: Bernd Meyburg in litt. *to AfricanBirding, January 2006*

Sightings of Lesser Kestrel, Amur and Red-footed Falcons mapped

The Migrating Kestrel Project (MKP) of the Birds of Prey Working Group, Endangered Wildlife Trust, has commenced an initiative with NaturalWorld to map sightings of the Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni*, Amur Falcon *F. amurensis* and Red-footed Falcon *F. vespertinus* in southern Africa. The MKP collects information on these species in their wintering grounds to assess and address conservation issues. Volunteers of the MKP counted over 90,000 Lesser Kestrels during summer 2005–06 at 44 different roosts. However, it is thought that more roosts occur and plotting sightings on a map is expected to help find these. A map interface is also ideal to record the arrival and departure of migrating birds in southern Africa. Additionally, it is hoped that this exercise will help determine if some falcons overwinter in the subregion. Sightings can be entered at www.natworld.org. More about the Migrating Kestrel Project can be found at www.kestreling.com.

Source: capebirdnet June 2006

Lesser Kestrel / Faucon crécerellette *Falco naumanni* (Mark Anderson)

Barn Swallow / Hirondelle rustique *Hirundo rustica* (Mark Anderson)

Airport threatens huge Barn Swallow roost

The development of La Mercy airport, 20 km north of Durban, Kwazulu-Natal, proposed by the South African government, is threatening the winter roosting site of three million Barn Swallows *Hirundo rustica*. The site, the Mount Moreland Reedbed, lies on what would be the flight path for aircraft landing and taking off at the airport extension, which is being proposed apparently to meet the demands of hosting the World Cup 2010.

Source: *www.birdlife.org*

Internet resources

New website on Palearctic migrants in Africa

A new website on Palearctic migrants in Africa has been created by Dr Bruno Walther of the University of Stellenbosch, South Africa, and Professor Dr Carsten Rahbek of the University of Copenhagen, Denmark, at www.macroecology.ku.dk/africamigrants. The website can be used to download publications on Palearctic migrants in Africa; download a list of Western Palearctic bird species migrating within Africa; download geo-referenced records on the distribution of Palearctic migrants in Africa; enter new records for Palearctic migrants in Africa; and find useful links to other websites dealing with bird migration. Information or contacts about the following are particularly welcomed: *Locustella* warblers (River Warbler *L. fluviatilis*, Savi's Warbler *L. luscinioides* and Grasshopper Warbler *L. naevia*); *Ficedula* flycatchers (Collared Flycatcher *F. albicollis*, Pied Flycatcher *F. hypoleuca* and Semi-collared Flycatcher *F. semitorquata*); and endangered migrant bird species. Data can be entered directly into the website.

Mammal-watching website

Jon Hall has recently established a mammal-watching website as a source of information about where and how to find many of the world's 5,000 mammal species. Given Africa's rich mammal fauna, it is perhaps surprising that the continent is currently rather poorly represented on the site and Jon would welcome checklists of mammals seen on birding trips within Africa (and elsewhere), as well as details of where to see difficult species for inclusion at www.mammalwatching.com

The number of species in the wattle-eye genus *Dyaphorophyia*

Michel Louette

Le nombre d'espèces dans le genre *Dyaphorophyia*. Les pririts (ou gobemouches caronculés) du genre *Dyaphorophyia* sont considérés comme appartenant à quatre ou six espèces. Cette différence est due au fait que les taxons *blissetti*, *chalybea* et *jamesoni* sont traités soit comme une seule espèce comprenant trois sous-espèces, soit comme trois espèces à part entière. L'auteur analyse les arguments en faveur (principalement les différences morphologiques et la parapatrie altitudinale de deux des taxons) et en défaveur (leurs plumages juvéniles similaires, la variation individuelle des vocalisations et le niveau comparable des différences morphologiques entre les sous-espèces d'une espèce proche) de chaque traitement, et suggère que, pour le moment, il est préférable de ne reconnaître qu'une seule espèce, malgré les arguments pour l'attribution du statut d'allo-espèce à chaque taxon.

Summary. The wattle-eyes in the genus *Dyaphorophyia* are considered to comprise either four or six species. This difference is due to the treatment of the taxa *blissetti*, *chalybea* and *jamesoni*, which are variously considered to be a single species comprising three subspecies, or three separate species. This paper discusses the arguments pro (principally the morphological differences and elevational parapatry of two taxa) and contra specific status (their similar juvenile plumages, individual variation in vocalisations and the similar level of morphological differences exhibited amongst subspecies of a closely related species), and suggests that, for now, it is preferable to recognise just one species, despite the arguments in favour of recognising all three taxa as allospecies.

The wattle-eyes in the genus *Dyaphorophyia* are considered to comprise four species in *The Birds of Africa* (Urban *et al.* 1997), whereas in some other recent works (Dowsett & Dowsett-Lemaire 1993, Dickinson 2003) six species are listed. The difference lies in the treatment of the taxa *blissetti*, *chalybea* and *jamesoni*, which are variously considered to comprise a single species comprising three subspecies, or three separate species. Here I discuss the arguments pro and contra these treatments.

No molecular analysis of this group is presently available and no proof of sympatric occurrence during the breeding season (suggesting separate species) or evidence of interbreeding in contact zones (suggesting conspecificity) exists. It should also be noted that molecular studies do not always produce unambiguous results (see Maclean *et al.* 2005 for a recent overview). To establish which taxa in this group of related populations should be considered as species, one therefore must resort to the comparison and evaluation of the differences in morphology, acoustics, behaviour, habitat, etc., and the evaluation of the level of resemblance in related groups.

The genus *Dyaphorophyia*

The genus *Dyaphorophyia*, which is sometimes subsumed within *Platysteira*, forms part of the family Platysteiridae, which further includes the genera *Megabyas*, *Bias*, *Pseudobias* (all three monotypic), *Batis* (19 species) and *Platysteira* (4 species) (Louette 2006). The family is endemic to sub-Saharan Africa, with one monotypic genus (*Pseudobias*) endemic to eastern Madagascar. In their compilation of molecular analyses of oscine passerines, Jønsson & Fjeldså (2006) place these genera in the 'Crown Corvida clade 7', together with several other Australasian and Malagasy genera as well as African helmet-shrikes and bush-shrikes. Other than the taxa *blissetti*, *chalybea* and *jamesoni*, the genus *Dyaphorophyia* comprises three incontrovertible species: the colourful Yellow-bellied Wattle-eye *D. concreta* and the classically coloured and rather similar Chestnut *D. castanea* and White-spotted Wattle-eyes *D. tonsa*. All are small, very short-tailed, insectivorous forest birds with conspicuous blue, purplish or green eye-wattles. All populations of each species have very similar measurements (see Louette 2006),

and eye-wattles are present in both sexes, but undeveloped in immatures.

The Yellow-bellied Wattle-eye *D. concreta* has a very disjunct distribution and four subspecies (Figs. 1–2). Both morphological variation and sexual dimorphism are important and regionally variable, with unusual characteristics in plumage coloration, resulting in morphologically feminine males, semi-feminine males and hyper-feminine females (Louette 2005). For example, the underparts of male *D. c. graueri* are usually bright yellow, but in some birds these are chestnut—a feminine colour phase (female *graueri* underparts are heavily washed with chestnut of varying intensity). The yellow underparts of male *D. c. ansorgei* are sometimes washed chestnut, whilst others have a black breast patch, which is most likely a colour phase, although such birds have also been suspected to be hybrids with *D. blissetti*. Despite the aforementioned variation, Yellow-bellied Wattle-eye has always been considered a single species.

The Chestnut Wattle-eye *D. castanea* possesses two well-differentiated subspecies, whereas White-spotted Wattle-eye *D. tonsa* is monotypic.

The taxa *blissetti*, *chalybea* and *jamesoni*

This group of taxa has a fragmented distribution. Western *blissetti* ('Red-cheeked Wattle-eye') occurs from Sierra Leone east, reaching western Cameroon at *c.*09°30'E, at the foot of Mt Cameroon. Central *chalybea* ('Black-necked Wattle-eye') ranges from Cameroon (from Mt Kupe and the Rumpi Hills near Mt Cameroon east) to northern Gabon, with isolated populations on Bioko and in Gabela, Angola. Eastern *jamesoni* ('Jameson's Wattle-eye') occurs from the northern Albertine Rift and southern Sudan to a few forests in western Kenya and north-west Tanzania.

Morphological variation and sexual dimorphism are rather restricted (Figs. 3–4). Male *blissetti* has the head, upperparts, throat and upper breast glossy blackish-green, with a broad triangular chestnut patch from below the eye to the sides of throat and neck, the rest of the underparts being white; the eye-wattle is greenish-blue (Borrow & Demey 2001). The female is greyer and less glossy. Sexual plumage dimorphism is not pronounced but important in the size of the wattle, the latter being smaller in the female. The immature is duller above, with pale tawny on the throat, which becomes darker with age. Male and female *jamesoni* are very similar to *blissetti*, but differ in having the chestnut patch smaller, restricted to the neck-sides. Male *chalybea* lacks the chestnut cheeks and has pale golden-yellow underparts (this colour changing to white after death); the eye-wattle is emerald-green (Borrow & Demey 2001). The female is a duller version of the male, with smaller eye-wattles.

Arguments pro-splitting

Adult *chalybea* is rather different from the morphologically very similar, but geographically well separated *blissetti* and *jamesoni*: it has an all-black face pattern, lacking the red 'cheek', a differently-coloured eye-wattle and pale yellow, not white, underparts. Both *blissetti* and *chalybea* occur in western Cameroon, with no proof of interbreeding. Vocalisations of the three taxa differ: e.g. *jamesoni* has a song that is higher pitched with a different melodic structure to *blissetti* (see Chappuis 2000).

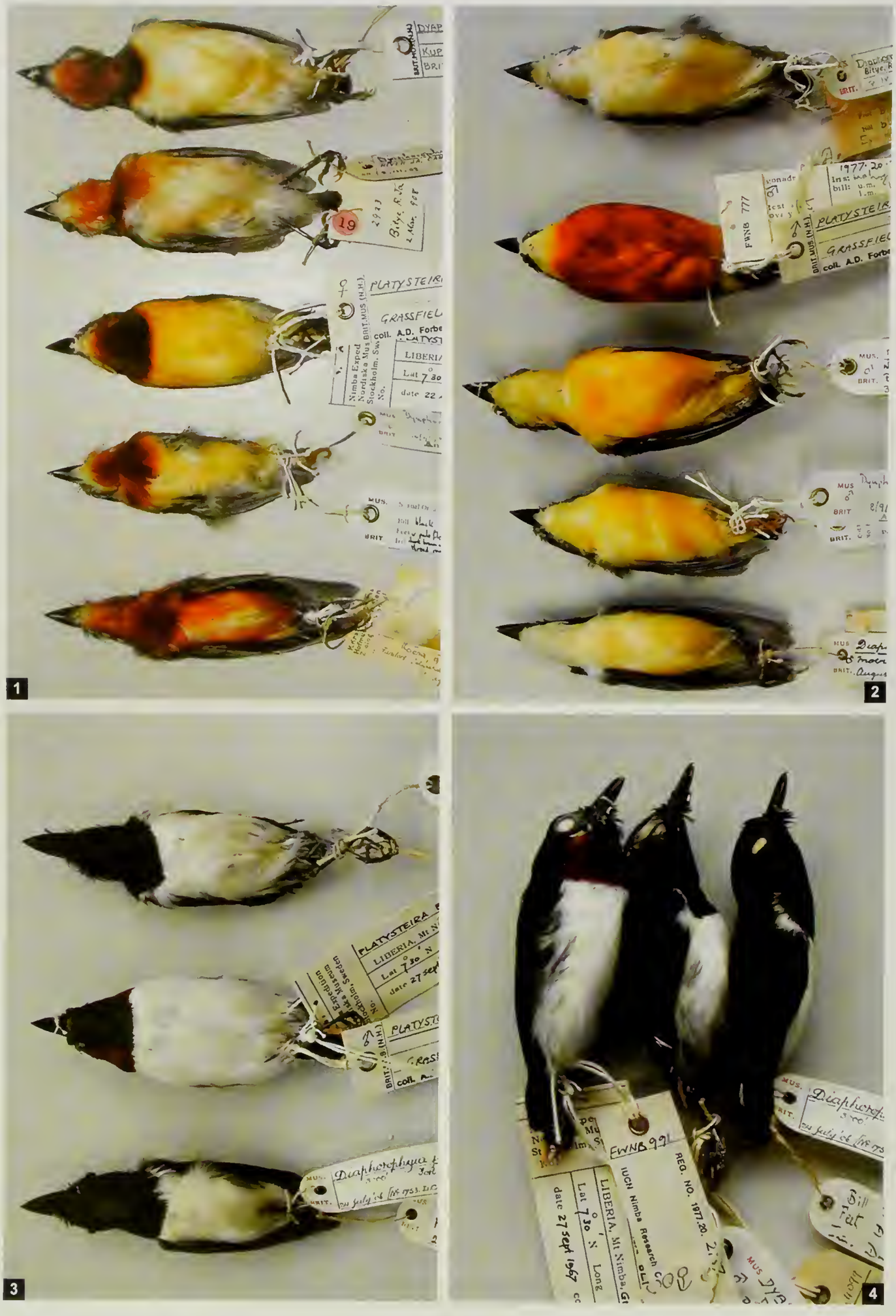
Arguments pro-lumping

Though *blissetti* and *chalybea* both occur in western Cameroon, they segregate altitudinally on Mt Cameroon, with *chalybea* occurring at higher elevations: they have been observed just 3 km apart (Eisentraut 1973, Languy & Njie Motombe 2003). No proof of breeding in sympatry is available.

Juveniles of *blissetti*, *chalybea* and *jamesoni* are very similar, having a common complex head pattern, which is likely a derivative—'apomorph'—character (see Hinkelmann & van den Elzen 2003 for recent use of apomorphic versus plesiomorphic characters in a case of avian taxonomy). In contrast to adult plumage, which can be an unreliable taxonomic marker (Brumfield & Brown 2001), a shared juvenile pattern is likely to be an important indication for conspecificity, and this constitutes a major argument to group the three taxa at species or superspecies level. (For the same reason—similar juvenile plumage—all populations of Yellow-bellied Wattle-eye should also be retained within a single species.)

Vocalisations vary individually. A territorial defence song is common to all taxa (Urban *et al.* 1997).

The two geographical populations of Chestnut Wattle-eye, which have always been treated as sub-


1
2
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PLATYSTEIRA
GRASSFIELD
LIBERIA
Nimba Expd
Nordiska Mus BRIT.MUS (N.H.)
Stockholm, Sweden
Coll. A.D. Forbes
Lat 7° 30' N
date 27 sept
EWNA 991
REG. NO. 1977.20.
IUCN Nimba Research
LIBERIA, Mt Nimba, G
Long
Diaphorophyia

species, appear to differ as much between them in adult plumage as the populations of Yellow-bellied Wattle-eye or the taxa *blissetti*, *chalybea* and *jamesoni*. Therefore, if the allopatric populations of Yellow-bellied Wattle-eye are lumped as one species, like those of Chestnut Wattle-eye, the same should be done with the allopatric and parapatric *blissetti*, *chalybea* and *jamesoni* in order to be consistent.

Discussion

The zoogeographical, morphological and acoustic information is equivocal for the decision concerning possible conspecificity of the populations. For a definitive conclusion, detailed field studies in the contact zone, with particular attention to behaviour and vocalisations, are required. Secondly, laboratory studies using molecular tools are needed to supplement the results from the field.

Pending these studies, it is questionable whether one should yield to pressure to split all allopatric and parapatric taxa into species. For general use it does not really matter whether allopatric populations are treated as species or subspecies. However, although their conservation importance does not change (Knox 1994), in practice, the Red Lists for birds deal only in species.

Zink (2004) appealed for a massive reorganisation of classifications, in order that the lowest ranks, be they species or subspecies, reflect evolutionary history. He accepts the rank of subspecies for a taxon that has had an independent evolutionary history. The proper application of the subspecies concept is encouraged also by other taxonomists (see, e.g., Cicero & Johnson 2006). Helbig *et al.* (2002), however, advocate ranking parapatric taxa that do not hybridise as species.

It is as yet unknown what happens in the contact zone between the parapatric *blissetti* and *chalybea*. Although *blissetti*, *chalybea* and *jamesoni* could be considered as allospecies in a superspecies (*sensu* Amadon & Short 1992), under the Biological Species Concept (*sensu* Haffer 1997), I consider it preferable, on balance, to recognise only four taxonomic units at species level within the genus. I thus include *chalybea* and *jamesoni* as subspecies in the species *D. blissetti*, for which I propose the name Blissett's Wattle-eye (reflecting the current French name: Pririt de Blissett), rather than Red-cheeked Wattle-eye, as *chalybea* does not possess red cheeks.

Captions to plates on opposite page

Figure 1. Plumage variation in females of Yellow-bellied Wattle-eye *Dyaphorophyia concreta*, from top to bottom / Variation dans le plumage des femelles du Pririt à ventre doré *Dyaphorophyia concreta*, de haut en bas: *D. c. graueri*, Cameroon; *D. c. graueri*, Cameroon; *D. c. concreta*, Liberia; *D. c. ansorgei*, Angola; and *D. c. graueri*, Uganda (Guy M. Kirwan, © The Natural History Museum, Tring)

Figure 2. Plumage variation in males of Yellow-bellied Wattle-eye *Dyaphorophyia concreta*, from top to bottom / Variation dans le plumage des mâles du Pririt à ventre doré *Dyaphorophyia concreta*, de haut en bas: *D. c. graueri*, Cameroon; *D. c. concreta*, Liberia; *D. c. graueri*, Cameroon; *D. c. ansorgei*, Angola; and *D. c. graueri*, Uganda (Guy M. Kirwan, © The Natural History Museum, Tring)

Figure 3. Plumage variation in males of Blissett's Wattle-eye *Dyaphorophyia blissetti*, from top to bottom / Variation dans le plumage des mâles du Pririt de Blissett *Dyaphorophyia blissetti*, de haut en bas: *D. b. chalybea*, Cameroon; *D. b. blissetti*, Liberia; and *D. b. jamesoni*, Uganda (Guy M. Kirwan, © The Natural History Museum, Tring)

Figure 4. Lateral view of the same male specimens of Blissett's Wattle-eye *Dyaphorophyia blissetti* as in Fig. 3, from left to right / Vue latérale des mêmes spécimens mâles du Pririt de Blissett *Dyaphorophyia blissetti* de la Fig. 3, de gauche à droite: *D. b. blissetti*, Liberia; *D. b. chalybea*, Cameroon; and *D. b. jamesoni*, Uganda (Guy M. Kirwan, © The Natural History Museum, Tring)

Acknowledgements

Many people were helpful with the examination of specimens in museums: they are acknowledged in Louette (2006). Alain Reygel examined all of the specimens in the Royal Museum for Central Africa, Tervuren, Belgium, with me. Edward Dickinson and Ron Demey suggested I write this paper, and Ron Demey and Lincoln Fishpool made constructive criticism on multiple drafts.

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Editorial comment.—Michel Louette's remarks on the taxonomy of certain members of the genus *Dyaphorophyia* were produced in response to an invitation by a member of the editorial committee, in order to support his classification of these taxa in the relevant volume (11) of *Handbook of the Birds of the World* (Louette 2006). We very much welcome similar contributions on the taxonomy of African birds by authors of other chapters in *HBW* as we consider it important that such persons defend novel or revisionist systematics by also submitting such work to peer review, rather than only publishing their decisions, with little or no explanation, in the Lynx Edicions volumes. In the present instance, Louette did not have access to the forthcoming proposals regarding the recognition of species under the Biological Species Concept by Collar *et al.* (in prep.), for which some details have already appeared in the public domain, most notably in Collar (2006). Therein, the author uses a scoring system that grades morphological and vocal differences (major character 3, medium 2, minor 1; minimum 7 for species status, with none permitted on minor differences alone) between allopatric taxa of Asian babblers. Because of the particularly interesting case offered

by the *Dyaphorophyia* taxa studied by Louette, we invited N. J. Collar and L. D. C. Fishpool, two of the authors of the new guidelines, to conduct their own examination of these forms. Their response was as follows.

'Our 'system' requires there to be a score of 7 or more for allopatric taxa to be regarded as separate at the species level. On the basis of our scores...*blissetti* and *chalybea* come out as separate species. And that is leaving aside the question of whether they are parapatric (if they are, then a lower score is sufficient under our system to separate them). On the basis of the skins only, separation of *blissetti* from *jamesoni* is hardest to justify, scoring only 4, possibly 5. This, however, is to ignore the fact the more distinct *chalybea* is geographically interposed between them; what additional weighting to give such phenomena is yet to be decided. In addition, if there are vocal differences, as suggested in some literature, then the scores here would be further increased.... Overall, we are happy to continue to treat them as separate species (BirdLife currently does so).'

We urge enterprising field workers to endeavour to fill some of the relevant gaps in our knowledge of these birds, by acquiring additional vocal material and depositing this in an accessible institutional archive, such as the British Library National Sound Archive, London, UK (www.bl.uk/collections/sound-archive/wild.html), by studying the potential contact zone between the apparently parapatric *blissetti* and *chalybea* in western Cameroon, and by publishing their results in a journal such as *Bull. ABC* or other refereed publication. Pending further evidence, the ABC list will follow Dowsett & Dowsett-Lemaire (1993) and Dickinson (2003), in treating the three taxa discussed here as separate species.

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Records of migrants and amendments to the status of exotics on Mauritius in 1989–93

Roger Safford[a] *and Rémy Basque*[b]

Nouvelles données sur des oiseaux migrateurs et révision du statut de certaines espèces exotiques sur l'île Maurice en 1989–93. L'île Maurice, située dans le sud-ouest tropique de l'océan Indien, possédait autrefois une riche communauté autochtone d'oiseaux terrestres et aquatiques nicheurs, dont seulement un petit nombre a survécu. Le reste de l'avifaune mauricienne est composé d'espèces exotiques et de visiteurs non nicheurs, sur lesquels peu de publications ont été faites. Cet article présente succinctement l'ensemble des observations de visiteurs non nicheurs et une sélection des observations d'espèces exotiques constituant des données nouvelles, au cours d'une période de quatre ans sur l'île Maurice en 1989–93. Des données sont fournies sur 38 espèces, dont six (l'Albatros à cape blanche *Thalassarche cauta*, le Puffin à pieds pâles *Puffinus carneipes*, le Canard colvert *Anas platyrhynchos*, le Labbe antarctique *Catharacta antarctica*, la Sterne voyageuse *Sterna bengalensis* et la Guifette leucoptère *Chlidonias leucopterus*) doivent être ajoutées à la liste la plus récente de l'île (Dowsett 1993), et deux (le Labbe de McCormick *Catharacta maccormicki* et le Padda de Java *Padda oryzivora*) supprimées de celle-ci. L'examen détaillé du statut des espèces migratrices et occasionnelles de l'île Maurice, comprenant la compilation et la vérification de toutes les observations faites par les nombreux ornithologues de passage, serait un travail bien utile mais considérable.

Summary. Mauritius, in the tropical south-west Indian Ocean, formerly had a rich native community of breeding land- and waterbirds, of which a small number survive. The remainder of the Mauritian avifauna is composed of exotics and non-breeding visitors, of which little has been published. This note summarises all observations of non-breeding visitors and selected observations of exotics where they add to existing documentation, from a four-year period of residence on Mauritius in 1989–93. Data are provided on 38 species, of which six (Shy Albatross *Thalassarche cauta*, Flesh-footed Shearwater *Puffinus carneipes*, Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*, Subantarctic Skua *Catharacta antarctica*, Lesser Crested Tern *Sterna bengalensis* and White-winged Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus*) are additions to the most recent island checklist by Dowsett (1993), and two (South Polar Skua *Catharacta maccormicki* and Java Sparrow *Padda oryzivora*) should be deleted from it. A comprehensive review of the status of migrants and vagrants on Mauritius, compiling and verifying all observations by the many visiting ornithologists, would be a worthwhile but large task.

Mauritius, one of the Mascarene islands in the tropical south-west Indian Ocean, formerly possessed an extraordinarily rich native community of breeding land- and waterbirds (Cheke 1987, Cheke & Hume in press). As on the other Mascarene islands, Réunion and Rodrigues, the native wildlife has been devastated by human activities and their consequences in the last 400 years, leaving but a small number of extant species, several of which are highly endangered.

Two other components of the Mauritian avifauna are exotics and non-breeding visitors. Most are globally abundant and therefore have attracted little attention. Records were summarised, mostly without detail, by Staub (1973, 1976, 1993) and Temple (1976), and the ecological history of the resident avifauna (native and exotic) was briefly presented by Cheke (1987), with more detail soon to appear (Cheke & Hume in press). Information from these and a few other sources was compiled by Dowsett (1993) into a checklist for Mauritius, which included 89 species. Jones (1996) provided updated information and discussion on the exotics. Sinclair & Langrand (1998) covered Mauritius in their Malagasy region field guide. Rodrigues, politically part of Mauritius, was treated separately by Dowsett; see also Showler & Cheke (2002) for a summary of more recent information.

This paper is an account of all records by RS (the observer in all cases unless otherwise stated) of non-breeding visitors during a four-year residence on Mauritius, in 1989–93, supplemented by observations and photographs from a visit by RB in 1990. It does not pretend to offer a complete update to Dowsett's (1993) checklist or Sinclair & Langrand's (1998) field guide, nor a comprehensive review of the status of migrants and vagrants on Mauritius. The latter, as has been performed for Seychelles (Skerrett 1996, Skerrett & Seychelles Bird Records Committee 2001, Skerrett *et al.* 2006), would be a worthy but much larger task, as many observers have unpublished records to contribute, especially if Réunion and Rodrigues were also to be included, as they should ideally be.

Selected observations (or lack of them, in cases where sightings might have been expected based on literature) on exotics in 1989–93 are also presented, including the following:

- Species listed by Dowsett (1993) as resident (native or introduced) for which the status in 1989–93 was or may have been substantially different from that given by Dowsett, and also by Sinclair & Langrand (1998), who generally follow Dowsett regarding the presence of exotics.
- Species listed by Dowsett (1993) as possibly extinct on Mauritius.
- One newly established exotic with an apparently self-sustaining population (Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos*), not listed by Dowsett (1993). Other exotics, such as Laughing Dove *Streptopelia senegalensis*, have become established since 1993, or are becoming established (Jones 1996, Cheke 2005), but no attempt has been made to review all such species here.

Following each species' name, the status category given by Dowsett (1993) is shown: R = resident (presumably native, as exotics have a separate category); M = intra-African migrant (African referring to the combined African and Malagasy regions, including subantarctic islands); P = Palearctic migrant; V = vagrant (normally five records or fewer); I = introduced species, now established; E = formerly present but now extinct; § = occurrence requires proof. Species not listed by Dowsett (1993) are indicated thus *. Where appropriate, based on data herein, a revised category is proposed, with the previous category (Dowsett 1993) mentioned in brackets. Several of the species concerned have recently been subject to taxonomic review, which is not discussed here; nomenclature follows the 2005 African Bird Club checklist.

The key site for waterbird observations was Terre Rouge estuary (Abhaya & Probst 1995), a small, polluted and partly infilled estuary north of Port-Louis, on the north-west coast (20°08'S 057°29'E). Six-monthly waterfowl counts were conducted here between January 1991 and January 1993, as part of the African Waterfowl Census (Perennou 1991, 1992, Taylor 1993), and the site was also visited on a few other occasions. The results of these counts are repeated here (Table 1), giving a reasonable indication of the migrant waterfowl community of Mauritius; for most species, Terre Rouge may hold the majority of the total Mauritian population. Under the name Rivulet Terre Rouge Estuary Bird Sanctuary, it was designated as Mauritius' first and only Ramsar site (wetland of international importance), covering 26 ha, in 2001. It is close to, but not the same as Mer Rouge (referred to by Temple 1976); Mer Rouge was a larger and more productive tidal area, now reclaimed and occupied by warehouses, immediately south of Terre Rouge (A. S. Cheke pers. comm. 2005, Cheke & Hume in press). Several other coastal areas hold a few hundred wading birds, in particular saltpans and estuarine areas between Tamarin and Le Morne, in the south-west, although there is undoubtedly interchange between Terre Rouge and the south-western sites.

***Shy Albatross** *Thalassarche cauta* **V**

First record for Mauritius. In August 1993, an albatross was brought to Mahebourg by fishermen. News of the discovery reached C. G. Jones, and as a result, several observers including CGJ, B. Bell, L. Smart and RS examined it (Fig. 1). The bird died soon after; the specimen was retained by a local man and has unfortunately proven impossible to trace. All agreed that it was an immature of the Shy Albatross complex, which is now frequently treated as comprising multiple species and subspecies (but arrangements vary; see e.g. Dickinson 2003). H. Shirihai and P. Ryan (*in litt.* 2003) examined photographs and confirmed the identification, adding the following comments. Within the complex, Chatham Albatross *T.* (*c.*) *eremita* can

Table 1. Waterfowl counts at Terre Rouge estuary, near Port-Louis, Mauritius, undertaken for the African Waterfowl Census, 1991–93. Counts in the left hand five columns were previously published in Perennou (1991, 1992) and Taylor (1993). All counts by the author, except that in July 1992 which was by K. Duffy and those in 1973–74 (included for comparison) which were by A. S. Cheke (pers. comm. 2005).

Tableau 1. Dénombrements d'oiseaux d'eau dans l'estuaire de Terre Rouge, près de Port-Louis, île Maurice, conduits dans le cadre des recensements internationaux d'oiseaux d'eau en Afrique, 1991–93. Les données des cinq premières colonnes ont été publiées auparavant in Perennou (1991, 1992) et Taylor (1993). Tous les dénombrements ont été faits par l'auteur, sauf celui de juillet 1992 fait par K. Duffy et ceux de 1973–1974 (inclus pour comparaison) faits par A. S. Cheke (comm. pers. 2005).

Species	Dates of counts						
	12/02/ 1991	06/07/ 1991	17/01/ 1992	01/07/ 1992	16/01/ 1993	Other dates, 1989–93	1973–74[2]
Green-backed Heron *Butorides striata*[1]	8	15	10	9	16		1
Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola*	13	20	57	8	45		25–50
Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*			3				0–4
Greater Sand Plover *Charadrius leschenaultii*	10	1	21		12		1–20
Greater/Lesser Sand Plover *Charadrius leschenaultii/mongolus*	5	3	20		3	Max. 100 (Jan 90)	
Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica*	3	2	3			Max. 4 (Mar 92)	0–1
Eurasian Curlew *Numenius arquata*						None, Terre Rouge[3]	1–30
Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*	30	10	55	10	36		20–50
Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*	12		25		13		15–30
Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis*						1, 18 Dec 89[3]	0–1
Terek Sandpiper *Xenus cinereus*	10	4	15		8		0–4
Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*			1		1		0–1
Grey-tailed Tattler *Heteroscelus brevipes*	1					1, Jan–Mar, Dec 90[3]	
Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*[4]	51	25	68		70		30–50+
Sanderling *Calidris alba*		7	11		5		0–10
Little Stint *Calidris minuta*	3	2	3		1	Max. 4 (Mar 92)	0–4
Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea*	603	350	1049	250	514		150–300
Great Knot *Calidris tenuirostris*						1, 28 Dec 1990	
Common Tern *Sterna hirundo*	44		15		6	Max. 61 (Mar 90)	7–50
Little/Saunders's Tern *Sterna albifrons/saundersi*	2		1			1, Dec 89–Jan 90	0–1
Lesser Crested Tern *Sterna bengalensis*						2, Jan 91	0–1
White-winged Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus*					1	2, Jan–Mar 90[3]	

[1]Green-backed Heron is a breeding resident, not a migrant, but is included here to present a complete list of waterbirds present.

[2]Counts from four visits in November 1973–January 1974 to the adjacent Mer Rouge; despite the loss of the much larger Mer Rouge area (see text), in 1989–93 Terre Rouge may have held sufficient habitat for the Mauritian populations of these species. A. S. Cheke also identified one Greater Crested Tern *Sterna bergii* (not seen by us in 1989–93), and a suspected Red Knot *Calidris canutus* which would be a first record for Mauritius but was not confirmed.

[3]See text for more details.

[4]The only wader ringed in Mauritius to be recovered abroad was a Ruddy Turnstone ringed by A. S. Cheke (pers. comm. 2005) on 14 February 1974 and killed at Ratnagiri in India (between Bombay and Goa) on 18 August 1975; this mirrors recoveries of Seychelles-ringed Ruddy Turnstones in Kazakhstan, Iran and Dagestan (Skerrett *et al.* 2001).

be eliminated by the pale head, but the other key features (amount of black on the tip of the underwing, and amount of grey on the head/neck) are difficult to assess with flash photographs and the primaries partially closed, and the identification is best left as *cauta*, *steadi* or *salvini* until (or if) the specimen can be found. Of these three taxa, based on the photographs, Ryan considers *steadi* (much the most abundant off South Africa: Hockey *et al.* 2005) most likely, and *salvini* least so.

Audubon's Shearwater *Puffinus lherminieri* **M**
One to two seen offshore from Tamarin and Albion (west coast) between September 1992 and March 1993. Few recent sightings reported (Temple 1976, Merton & Bell 2003), but probably a not uncommon visitor, as it breeds in large numbers on Réunion (race *bailloni*) and formerly did so on Mauritius (Cheke 1987).

***Flesh-footed Shearwater** *Puffinus carneipes* **M**
First records for Mauritius. Approximately ten off Le Morne on 6 January 1992. During a boat trip

off Le Morne with H. Corbett, most of *c.*50 large dark shearwaters were Wedge-tailed Shearwaters *P. pacificus*, an abundant breeder in the region. One loose group of Flesh-footed Shearwaters was seen well, showing the deep-based, pinkish-horn bill with a dark tip (the narrower, all-dark bill of Wedge-tailed Shearwaters was easy to see under the same conditions). HC had a few days earlier identified Flesh-footed Shearwaters whilst surveying cetaceans in this area, and was familiar with the species from elsewhere.

Reported by Staub (1976) from Rodrigues, by Harrison (1983) in Mascarene waters, and a sighting south-east of Mauritius is mapped by Sinclair & Langrand (1998), but no records are documented; also reported from the waters off Madagascar (Langrand & Sinclair 1994) and Seychelles (Skerrett 1996).

Barau's Petrel *Pterodroma baraui* **M (V)**
Recorded offshore from Albion and Tamarin in February 1992 and January–March 1993, with a maximum of 33 flying north off Albion in 70 minutes on 18 February 1993, when a cyclone was close to the island.

There appear to be no published reports of Barau's Petrels (which regularly breed only at high altitude on Réunion) at sea off Mauritian coasts. However, the species has been recorded at Round Island: a corpse found by Temple (1976), and more recent records of live birds (C. G. Jones pers. comm. 1998). In addition, A. S. Cheke (*in* Jouanin 1987) observed birds over the Mauritian mainland, heading inland at Tamarin Falls, in February 1974.

Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* **E (R)**
No records by ourselves or any other observations known to us in 1989–93. The last period when Cattle Egrets were known to be present on the island commenced with the arrival of a flock of *c.*30 in 1967; by 1978, none remained (A. S. Cheke pers. comm. 2005). Therefore, the species is now extinct but may recolonise, as has happened before (Cheke 1987).

***Mallard** *Anas platyrhynchos* **I**
Recorded regularly at Mare Longue Reservoir, Tamarin Falls Reservoir and Piton du Milieu Reservoir. The largest numbers were at Tamarin Falls, with a maximum of 31 birds on 25 February 1991. See also comments under Meller's Duck.

Meller's Duck *Anas melleri* **E?**
One at Valetta Reservoir on 8 September 1989 (RS, S. Tonge). Searched for unsuccessfully on numerous other occasions at this site, the traditional Mauritian location for this species, and also at nearby Piton du Milieu Reservoir.

Meller's Duck is a globally Endangered species endemic to Madagascar with an introduced population on Mauritius (BirdLife International 2004). Though it was widely believed in 1989–93 to be the only duck species on Mauritius, it was in truth greatly outnumbered by Mallard, and this was already the case in 1985 (A. S. Cheke pers. comm. 2005). The presence of Mallards was noted by Staub (1993), who reported that 37 birds were introduced to Mare Longue, Mare aux Vacoas and Piton du Milieu reservoirs in 1979, and subsequently displaced Meller's Ducks from Tamarin Falls reservoir. Jones (1996) noted that they were expanding their range and estimated the population at *c.*50 birds.

Most observers, Mauritian and foreign, were in 1989–93 unaware of the presence of Mallards and so automatically identified all feral ducks as Meller's; reports of the latter should be checked and RS was aware of no confirmed records of Meller's during that period, with the exception of the 1989 sighting above. It is possible, indeed likely, that Meller's is extinct on Mauritius (Safford 1993). A few might conceivably survive in rarely visited marshes and rivers on the central plateau. Valetta is seldom visited by birdwatchers but no Meller's was seen there (or elsewhere) by A. S. Cheke (pers. comm. 2005) in 1996 and 1999. A few Meller's Ducks were, at least until recently, kept in captivity and further releases are therefore a possibility.

McKelvey (1977) estimated the Mauritian population at *c.*30 in the mid-1970s, although on what basis is unclear. The virtual absence of concrete information on the status of Meller's Duck on Mauritius makes it difficult to identify the reasons for the species' decline and to investigate the suggestion that the increase in Mallards has caused or contributed to this decrease.

Eleonora's Falcon *Falco eleonorae* **P (V)**
Two immatures hunting at midday over the main ridge of the Bambous Mountains around Pic Grand Fond (an area also known as l'Étoile), on 20 February 1993. The birds had been present at

this site since December 1992, when they were found by M. Nicoll, who recorded up to four together. They afforded prolonged views, hunting for flying insects, especially dragonflies, over the forested ridge, mostly gliding back and forth, with occasional bursts of fast wingbeats producing extraordinary acceleration to capture insect prey, which was consumed in midair. See also comments under Sooty Falcon.

Sooty Falcon *Falco concolor* **V, ?P (P)**
An adult at Montagne Cocotte, at dusk on 10 March 1991, was seen briefly, flying past at close range, showing the diagnostic all blue-grey plumage of an adult Sooty Falcon.

In addition, single falcons, believed to be Eleonora's or Sooty, were observed on 12 December 1989, 22 December 1990, 6 January 1993 and 27 March 1993. Given the difficulty of identifying large falcons, these briefly seen birds are left unidentified. The only Mauritian specimen known to us of either, an Eleonora's collected at Grand Port (south-east Mauritius) in or around December 1870, was for a century misidentified as a Sooty, whilst the only other large falcon collected on Mauritius (also in or around December 1870) is a Peregrine *Falco peregrinus* apparently of the migratory Palearctic race *calidus*. Both specimens are in the University Museum of Zoology, Cambridge, UK (Benson & Penny 1971, Benson 1971, with dates confirmed from the museum's specimen catalogue).

The Eleonora's above were the only migrant falcons known to have remained in one place for an extended period. The small number of records of any migrant falcons during the intensive and prolonged field work by RS suggests that they are rare but regular in Mauritius; if 1989–93 were typical years, numbers spending the non-breeding season there must be tiny and a fairly insignificant proportion of the global population of 4,500 pairs of Eleonora's and perhaps 40,000 pairs of Sooty estimated in the mid-1990s (Ferguson-Lees & Christie 2001).

Common Quail *Coturnix coturnix* **E (R)**
No records by ourselves, or any other observations known to us in 1989–93. Formerly present, though it is unclear how well established the species became, as it was repeatedly introduced and never known to be native (Cheke 1987). If present, it would thus have status I (not R, as in Dowsett 1993). Common Quail was already considered possibly extinct on Mauritius by Rountree *et al.* (1952) and this is confirmed by Jones (1996). More recent sightings are considered to be releases or escapes from quail farms (Staub 1976, Cheke 1987).

Purple Swamphen *Porphyrio porphyrio* **E (E?)**
No records by ourselves, despite searches of various freshwater wetlands by RS with K. Duffy *et al.*, including small patches of marsh at Flic-en-Flac, where it was last reported in 1976 (an isolated report *c.*20 years after any previous sighting: Michel 1981), and on the Plaine des Roches, which seemed the most suitable; no other observations known to us in 1989–93 or since. Formerly resident (probably, but not certainly, introduced: Cheke 1987), but considered possibly extinct by Dowsett (1993); after such a long period without records, it is indeed presumably extinct on Mauritius (Jones 1996).

Greater Sand Plover *Charadrius leschenaultii* **P**
Lesser Sand Plover *Charadrius mongolus* **P § (V)**
Among the up to 100 sand plovers we observed at Terre Rouge estuary in 1989–93, many were undoubted Greater (Figs. 2–3), but amongst these RS (once with RB and J.-M. Probst) saw at least twice obviously small, delicately built, short-billed and dark-legged birds which appeared like typical Lesser Sand Plovers. However, the diagnostic features of the wing, tail and bill nail (Hirschfeld *et al.* 2000) were not noted.

Greater Sand Plover has long been known to occur in Mauritius, but the status of Lesser Sand Plover is poorly known, with no specimens or well-documented records; the same is true in Madagascar and the Comoros (Morris & Hawkins 1998, Louette 2004). Temple (1976) reported seeing several *mongolus* with *leschenaultii* in 1973–75. P. Hockey *et al.* (pers. comm. 1989), who are very familiar with both species in Africa, were in no doubt that they observed small numbers of Lesser Sand Plovers in Mauritius in 1989 and subsequently (Hockey 1993). Given the well-known presence in eastern and southern Africa of Lesser Sand Plover of the race *pamirensis* (Hirschfeld *et al.* 2000, Hockey *et al.* 2005), its occurrence in the Malagasy region, including Mauritius, is to be expected (C. S. Roselaar *in litt.* 2005).

Eurasian Curlew *Numenius arquata* P
One at the Black River estuary on 10 March 1990 was the only record. The bird had an exceptionally long bill, compared to that of Eurasian Curlews in Europe, making it easy to distinguish from the abundant Whimbrel. As noted by Staub (1976) and Temple (1976), Eurasian Curlews are much rarer than Whimbrels in Mauritius, and the same applies elsewhere in the Malagasy region (Benson 1971). However, influxes apparently occur, accounting for the exceptional 25–30 seen by A. S. Cheke (pers. comm. 2005) at Mer Rouge in November 1973.

Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis* V
One at Terre Rouge estuary on 18 December 1989 was the only record.

Grey-tailed Tattler *Heteroscelus brevipes* V
One at Terre Rouge from at least 15 January to 9 March 1990 (Fig. 4) and (perhaps the same individual) on 28 December 1990 and 12 February 1991. The whistling calls, quite distinct from those of the otherwise very similar Wandering Tattler *H. incanus*, were heard several times. This bird was found in late 1989 by P. Hockey *et al.*, and referred to in passing by Safford (1991) and Perennou (1991). As the site was not visited in March–December 1990, it is unknown whether the bird remained throughout the period.

Great Knot *Calidris tenuirostris* V
A first-winter at Terre Rouge estuary on 28 December 1990. This record was described earlier (Safford 1991); a photograph is provided here (Fig. 5).

Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica* P (V)
Terek Sandpiper *Xenus cinereus* P (V)
Little Stint *Calidris minuta* P (V)
These three species are listed by Dowsett (1993) as vagrants, but several were recorded annually at Terre Rouge; Terek Sandpiper was also regularly found elsewhere, e.g. at Petite Rivière Noire. All three are therefore probably better treated as regular migrants. Most stints were in winter plumage, making elimination of the potential vagrant Red-necked Stint *Calidris ruficollis* very difficult; however, one in breeding plumage in March 1992 was definitely a Little Stint.

***Subantarctic Skua** *Catharacta antarctica* M §
South Polar Skua *C. maccormicki* (V): **delete from list**
Three *Catharacta* off the north and north-west coast, between Port-Louis and Flat Island, on 26 August 1989. None seen on other boat trips in September–January. These birds closely resembled Great Skuas *C. skua*, with which RS is familiar from the North Atlantic, and thus also resembled the very similar Subantarctic Skua. However, some dark-morph South Polar Skuas are very similar, and these birds pose such identification problems that photographic or specimen evidence would be preferable to confirm the identity of skuas in Mauritian waters.

Both species are known from Seychelles and southern Africa. In southern Africa, Subantarctic is much the commoner (Hockey *et al.* 2005), and the same applies in Seychelles, where Subantarctic is an annual visitor (Skerrett *et al.* 2001), whereas there are just four records of South Polar (Skerrett *et al.* 2006). *Catharacta* appear to be regular in small numbers in Mauritian waters. Rountree *et al.* (1952) refer to a specimen in the Mauritius Institute, Port-Louis (MIPL), identified as *C. antarctica*, from (or perhaps offshore of) Le Morne. Staub (1976) and Temple (1976) include Great Skua *C. skua,* which was formerly usually lumped with Subantarctic, so these should presumably be considered as reports of Subantarctic; Temple referred to specimens (*sic*) in MIPL and sightings in July–November. A. S. Cheke (pers. comm. 2005) saw several such birds in 1973–75, as has C. G. Jones (pers. comm. 1989) since then. Dowsett (1993: 309) points to uncertainties over *Catharacta* occurring in Malagasy waters, but treats reports of *C. skua* as referring to what is now *C. maccormicki* rather than *C. antarctica*; for this reason, the previous records (cited above) led him to list only *maccormicki* for Mauritius, as a vagrant. However, since the reports of *C. skua* appear to refer to *C. antarctica*, this leaves no published claims of *maccormicki* from Mauritius.

***Lesser Crested Tern** *Sterna bengalensis* V
Two adults, at Terre Rouge estuary on 18 January 1991, were seen well with Common Terns *S. hirundo*; the clearly orange (not greenish-yellow) bill easily eliminated Greater Crested Tern *S. bergii*.

Not listed by Dowsett (1993), but previously recorded: Staub (1976) included it, based at least


1


5


2


6


3


7


4


8

on a sighting by A. S. Cheke (pers. comm. 2005) and A. W. Diamond at Fort William in January 1975. Staub (1993) includes a photograph of a Lesser Crested Tern with Common Terns, taken at Terre Rouge on an unknown date.

Little Tern *Sterna albifrons* §
It was impossible to determine whether the small terns in Table 1 were this species or Saunders's Tern *S. saundersi*. The latter is not listed for Mauritius by Dowsett (1993) and the relative abundance of these two species in the Malagasy region is poorly known. Most identified records elsewhere in the region are of Saunders's, which at least on Seychelles does seem to be the commoner (Skerrett *et al.* 2001).

***White-winged Tern** *Chlidonias leucopterus* V
First records for Mauritius. Two first-winters at Terre Rouge estuary from 15 January to 9 March 1990 (Figs. 6–7), and one on 16 January 1993. Identified by, amongst other features, the short bill, white breast-sides and limited amount of black on the head.

Madagascar Turtle Dove *Streptopelia picturata* R (I)
Included here as Dowsett (1993), in accordance with nearly all other authors, treated it as an exotic. It was common in 1989–93, as described by Staub (1976) and Cheke (1987), but subfossil remains reveal it to be native (Mourer-Chauviré *et al.* 1999). It is possible that the native birds were 'subject to supplementary introduction from Madagascar' (Cheke 2005).

Mascarene Martin *Phedina borbonica* R (M)
Included here as Dowsett (1993) treated it as a migrant breeder, but no evidence of migration was witnessed in 1989–93, nor has any ever been reported. The population on Madagascar (*P. b. madagascariensis*) is at least partially migratory (Langrand 1990); Turner & Rose (1989) reported that *madagascariensis* has been recorded in Mauritius (and Réunion), but no documentation is available. The nominate race present in the Mascarenes is resident and has never been recorded elsewhere.

Java Sparrow *Padda oryzivora* E, or delete from list (I)
No records by ourselves, or any other observations known to us in 1989–93. Java Sparrows were last reported in Mauritius in 1892 (Cheke 1987, Jones 1996), apart from occasional escapes which have not led to a population becoming re-established (Jones 1996). This is, therefore, a long-extinct exotic, and it no longer occurs anywhere in the Malagasy region. Having disappeared so long ago, it probably should not have been included in the checklist, even as Extinct; no cut-off date is given, but exotics that died out more recently (such as Grey-headed Lovebird *Agapornis cana* and Cape Canary *Serinus canicollis*: Cheke 1987) were not included.

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Captions to plate on opposite page

Figure 1. Shy Albatross *Thalassarche cauta*, Mahebourg, Mauritius, August 1993 (Roger Safford)
Albatros à cape blanche *Thalassarche cauta*, Mahebourg, île Maurice, août 1993 (Roger Safford)
Figure 2. Greater Sand Plover *Charadrius leschenaultii* in non-breeding plumage, Terre Rouge estuary, March 1990 (Rémy Basque)
Pluvier de Leschenault *Charadrius leschenaultii* en plumage internuptial, estuaire de Terre Rouge, mars 1990 (Rémy Basque)
Figure 3. Greater Sand Plover *Charadrius leschenaultii* in breeding plumage, Terre Rouge estuary, March 1990 (Rémy Basque)
Pluvier de Leschenault *Charadrius leschenaultii* en plumage nuptial, estuaire de Terre Rouge, mars 1990 (Rémy Basque)
Figure 4. Grey-tailed Tattler *Heteroscelus brevipes*, Terre Rouge estuary, March 1990 (Rémy Basque)
Chevalier de Sibérie *Heteroscelus brevipes*, estuaire de Terre Rouge, mars 1990 (Rémy Basque)
Figure 5. Great Knot *Calidris tenuirostris*, Terre Rouge estuary, December 1990 (Roger Safford)
Becasseau de l'Anadyr *Calidris tenuirostris*, estuaire de Terre Rouge, mars 1990 (Rémy Basque)
Figures 6–7. White-winged Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus*, Terre Rouge estuary, March 1990 (Rémy Basque)
Guifette leucoptère *Chlidonias leucopterus*, estuaire de Terre Rouge, mars 1990 (Rémy Basque)
Figure 8. Common Tern *Sterna hirundo*, Terre Rouge estuary, March 1990 (Photos: Rémy Basque)
Sterne pierregarin *Sterna hirundo*, estuaire de Terre Rouge, mars 1990 (Rémy Basque)

hope, named above. Special thanks go to Carl Jones, Anthony Cheke and Philip Hockey for much interesting discussion and additional information, and Kevin Duffy and Jean-Michel Probst, companions on several birding ventures. Anthony Cheke also provided detailed comments and information which greatly improved the manuscript. Adrian Skerrett also kindly reviewed the manuscript and clarified the status of certain species in Seychelles.

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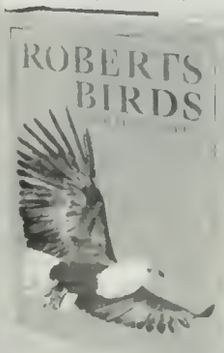

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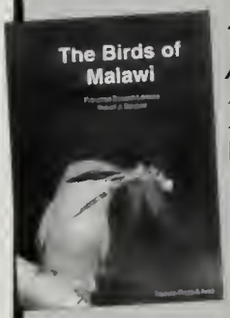

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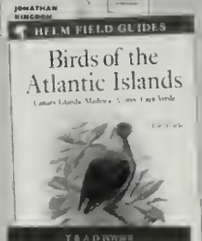

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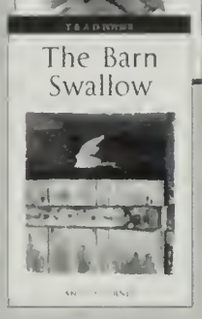

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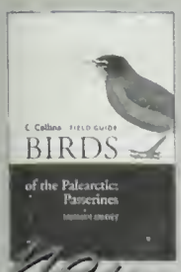

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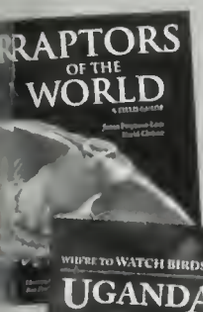

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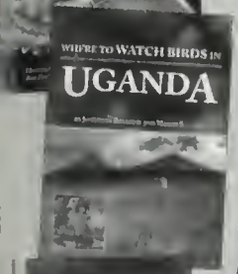

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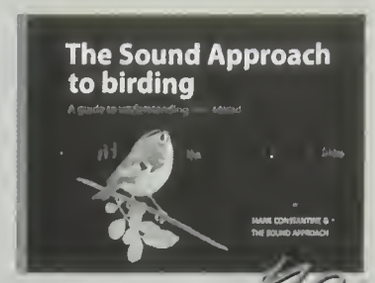

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Birds of Lusenga Plain National Park, Zambia

Peter Leonard

Les oiseaux du Parc National de la Plaine de Lusenga, Zambie. Le Parc National de la Plaine de Lusenga, situé à l'extrême nord de la Zambie, est mal connu et difficile d'accès. De récents travaux sur le terrain sont présentés ainsi qu'une liste annotée de 214 espèces d'oiseaux recensées dans le parc. Le site a été identifié comme une Zone d'Importance pour la Conservation des Oiseaux à cause de son importante biodiversité et de la présence de deux espèces globalement menacées, le Vautour oricou *Torgos tracheliotus* et la Grue caronculée *Bugeranus carunculatus*, et de 26 espèces confinées à un certain biome, parmi lesquelles 20 endémiques ou quasi endémiques du biome zambésien.

Summary. Lusenga Plain National Park, situated in the far north of Zambia, is poorly known and difficult to reach. This paper summarises recent field work and presents a list of 214 species recorded in the park with an indication of status and habitat. The park has been identified as an Important Bird Area due to its high biodiversity and the presence of two species of global conservation concern, Lappet-faced Vulture *Torgos tracheliotus* and Wattled Crane *Bugeranus carunculatus*, and 26 biome-restricted species, including 20 Zambezian endemics and near-endemics.

Lusenga Plain is a forgotten park. It is small by Zambian standards, difficult to reach and a long way off the beaten track. Nevertheless, interest in the park was generated during the preparation of the Zambian Important Bird Area (IBA) inventory when it became clear that Zambia's dominant biome (the Zambezian) was poorly represented in the high-rainfall areas of the Northern Province plateau. Biodiversity was known to be high in such areas and as Lusenga Plain National Park lies in this area and was already afforded protected status, it was suggested that it might make a suitable addition to the IBA network. However, data were very few and it became clear that new field work was going to be necessary. Furthermore, the state of the habitat needed to be assessed. Enquiries were made at the Zambia Wildlife Authority (ZAWA) headquarters, but unfortunately no-one had even heard of the park, let alone knew of its status or whether it was feasible to visit. I came to an informal agreement with ZAWA that I would investigate the park and report my findings.

Formerly a game reserve, the area became a national park in 1972. Until recently it had received almost no attention from ornithologists, or indeed field workers of any description. Therefore it should be noted that the following is still based on few data and visits to only small areas of the park.

Captions to plates on opposite page

Figure 1. Map of Lusenga Plain National Park and surrounding area.

Carte du Parc National de la Plaine de Lusenga et de ses environs.

Figure 2. View of Lusenga Plain from the southern edge, showing a finger of mushitu extending onto the plain (Pete Leonard)

La plaine de Lusenga vue à partir de la limite sud, avec une zone de mishitu (forêt dense sempervirente) s'étendant dans la plaine (Pete Leonard)

Figure 3. View over a valley in the park. Taken from open hill miombo and overlooking a strip of gallery mushitu, beyond which is more typical, closed miombo (Pete Leonard)

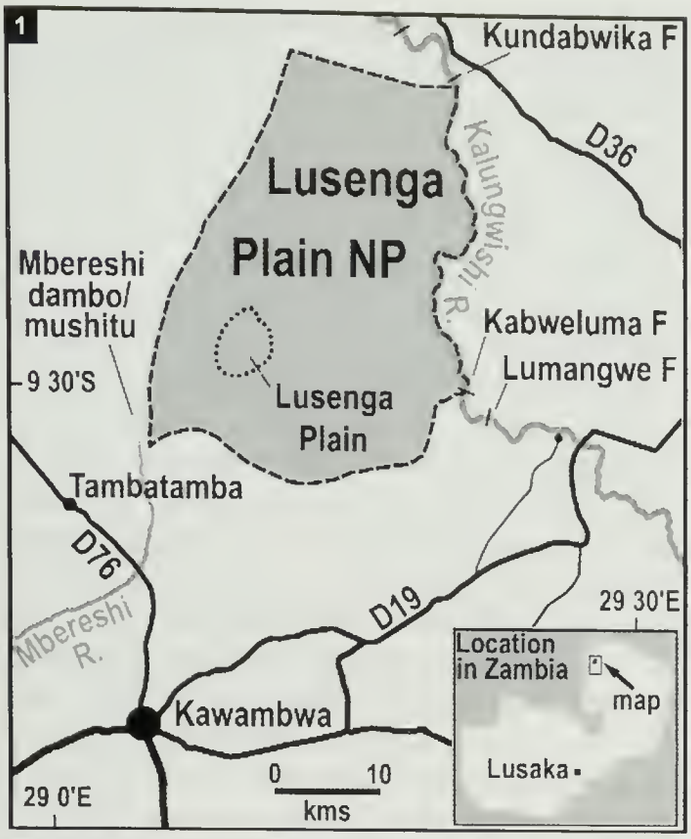
Une vallée à l'intérieur du parc. Vue prise à partir d'une zone de miombo ouvert surplombant une forêt galerie au-delà de laquelle se trouve une zone de miombo plus typique et fermé (Pete Leonard)

Figure 4. Kabweluma Falls on the Kalungwishi River (Pete Leonard)

Les chutes de Kabweluma sur la rivière Kalungwishi (Pete Leonard)

Figure 5. Lumangwe Falls on the Kalungwishi River (Pete Leonard)

Les chutes de Lumangwe sur la rivière Kalungwishi (Pete Leonard)


1
Kundabwika F
D36
Kalungwishi R.
Lusenga
Plain NP
Mbereshi
dambo/
mushitu
Kabweluma F
Lumangwe F
9 30'S
Lusenga
Plain
Tambatamba
D76
D19
29 30'E
Mbereshi
R.
Location
in Zambia
map
Kawambwa
Lusaka
0
10
kms
29 0'E


2


3


4


5

Geography and vegetation

Lusenga Plain National Park covers an area of *c.*880 km² in northernmost Kawambwa District, Luapula Province, between 09°13'–09°35'S and 29°03'–29°20'E. It lies in the north-western corner of the Northern Province plateau and is bordered to the east by the Kalungwishi River. The entire park falls within the Congo drainage system. The highest areas, reaching 1,374 m, are in the south. The north is somewhat lower, with the lowest point of *c.*980 m at the northernmost extremity.

The plain from which the park takes its name is in the south-western corner. It is oval-shaped and measures *c.*7 × 5 km. It was formed by the weathering of an old volcanic plug dome. Weathering of the softer rock has left an open, saucer-shaped depression surrounded by concentric rings of rocky ridges (Clarke & Loe 1974). The grassland of the plain is typical of upland dambos in northern Zambia and towards the centre there are some very wet, swampy areas. Along the small drainage lines entering the plain are patches of mushitu (moist evergreen forest) and set back from the plain itself are scattered patches of dry evergreen *Marquesia* forest.

Many of the park's rivers support strips of rich gallery mushitu, but the vast majority of the area is covered by woodland. This is mainly miombo (*Brachystegia*-dominated) of various formations ranging from tall, dense types on flatter terrain, to more open and sometimes stunted types on steep and rocky ground. Alluvial soils support patches of *Pteleopsis anisoptera* and at lower altitudes the woodland is undifferentiated and somewhat drier. The Kalungwishi is a sizeable river throughout the length of the park, with a variety of waterfalls and rocky rapids as well as quiet backwaters lined with riparian forest.

Field work

Between 23 and 26 August 2001, D. Chizuwa, L. Hamusikili and I explored two areas of the park with the aims of establishing a preliminary bird checklist and determining whether the park met the criteria needed to qualify as an Important Bird Area.

The first area visited was the south-western corner. This was approached from Kawambwa on the D76, on 23 August. After crossing the Mbereshi River a driveable track was followed from Tambatamba village to the site of the now-derelict Mbeleshi Wildlife Camp. It appeared that no ZAWA scouts had been stationed there for some time. From the camp, the track continued along the western edge of Mbereshi dambo, in the centre of which is an extremely large mushitu *c.*3 km long. Much of this would appear to lie within a forest reserve. The track continued around the head of the dambo and entered the park at *c.*09°32'S 29°04'E. The track was followed for another *c.*4 km until it crossed an arm of the Kafungila River, where we camped at 09°31'S 29°05'E. The following day I walked north-east from there to the southern tip of Lusenga Plain, explored several parts of the grassland and walked about one-third of its western perimeter.

On 25 August we returned to Kawambwa and visited Lumangwe and Kabweluma Falls via the D19, both of which lie on the Kalungwishi not far from the south-eastern corner of the park. We then drove to the north-eastern corner of the park on the D36 where, with help from local villagers, we located the site of the now abandoned Misapa Wildlife Camp, at 09°14'S 29°21'E. We camped here on the banks of the Kalungwishi and on the morning of 26 August I employed a fisherman to take me across the river in order to spend a morning in the park.

Birds

The avifauna was rich and a complete list of species known from the park is presented in the Appendix. This list includes information on habitats from which species are known and an indication of their status, as far as can be determined from our field work.

The total number of species recorded in the park now stands at 214, of which ten are Palearctic migrants, 27 Afrotropical migrants, 25 partial or possible migrants, and the remaining 152 residents. Two species of global conservation concern occur: Lappet-faced Vulture *Torgos tracheliotus* and Wattled Crane *Bugeranus carunculatus*; the latter probably breeds. A further four are of local conservation concern: Saddle-billed Stork *Ephippiorhynchus senegalensis*, Bateleur *Terathopius ecaudatus*, African Marsh Harrier *Circus ranivorus* and Southern Crowned Crane *Balearica regulorum* (Leonard 2005). Three species have restricted Zambian ranges: Angola Swallow *Hirundo angolensis*, Cassin's Flycatcher *Muscicapa cassini*

and Black-bellied Seedcracker *Pyrenestes ostrinus*, and 26 biome-restricted species occur, including 20 Zambezian endemics and near-endemics.

A few other species merit additional comment. Some of the woodland species showed a preference for certain areas. Southern Hyliota *Hyliota australis* was recorded only once (a family group), in less well-developed hill miombo. Red-cheeked Cordon-bleu *Uraeginthus bengalus* was usually found near small clearings in the woodland and Tawny-flanked Prinia *Prinia subflava*, Trilling *Cisticola woosnami* and Short-winged Cisticolas *C. brachypterus* tended to favour areas with long grass. Occasionally Red-collared Widowbirds *Euplectes ardens* were found in such areas too. The high density of Violet-backed Sunbirds *Anthreptes longuemarei* in the miombo was particularly notable as this species is generally not that common in Zambia.

Species found in both forest and woodland that were only found in the latter where it was particularly rich and well developed included Black-backed Barbet *Lybius minor*, Little Spotted Woodpecker *Campethera cailliautii*, Dusky Flycatcher *Muscicapa adusta* and Yellow White-eye *Zosterops senegalensis*. A few woodland species were common at forest edges, such as Common Bulbul *Pycnonotus barbatus* and Amethyst Sunbird *Nectarinia amethystina*. Pale-billed Hornbill *Tockus pallidirostris* was recorded once at a fruiting fig tree within a mushitu and a Whyte's Barbet *Stactolaema whytii* was observed in the canopy of dry evergreen forest. The habitat of Lead-coloured Flycatcher *Myioparus plumbeus* was particularly interesting, being apparently the ecotone between riparian forest and adjacent dry woodland along the Kalungwishi River. On one occasion several francolins, probably Red-necked *Francolinus afer*, were flushed from a patch of mushitu.

Several forest generalists were found to occur in varying densities according to the forest type. Thus, Yellow-rumped Tinkerbird *Pogoniulus bilineatus*, Little Greenbul *Andropadus virens* and Square-tailed Drongo *Dicrurus ludwigii* were least common in dry evergreen forest. The remaining species mentioned in this paragraph were all apparently absent from dry evergreen forest. Furthermore, Dark-backed Weaver *Ploceus bicolor* and Yellow-throated Leaflove *Chlorocichla flavicollis* were more common in riparian forest, whereas Cabanis's Greenbul *Phyllastrephus cabanisi*, Olive Sunbird *Cyanomitra olivacea* and Splendid Glossy Starling *Lamprotornis splendidus* were more common in mushitu. Grey-olive Bulbul *Phyllastrephus cerviniventris* was also absent from dry evergreen forest and seemed to prefer the narrower strips of gallery mushitu and riparian forest.

Some breeding behaviour was observed. A Wahlberg's Eagle *Aquila wahlbergi* was seen at a nest in open mushitu near Lusenga Plain. Green-backed Honeybird *Prodotiscus zambesiae* was regularly seen displaying in miombo and a Brown-backed Honeybird *P. regulus* displaying over dry woodland. A Dusky Lark *Pinarocorys nigricans* was displaying in a typical open woodland location which was still smouldering after a recent fire.

Local residents reported large owls beside the Kalungwishi River and although these may refer to Pel's Fishing Owl *Scotopelia peli*, the species' presence could not be confirmed. Southern Carmine Bee-eater *Merops nubicoides* was recorded regularly overhead, but all birds were on passage.

Until the work reported here, the park's bird list stood at just 27 species. Twelve of these were recorded again during our visit and the remaining 15 also probably still occur. The one plausible exception is Yellow-billed Oxpecker *Buphagus africanus*, which is perhaps no longer present due to the lack of large mammals. Of the 15 species not recorded by us, there are published references for only three: Yellow-billed Duck *Anas undulata* (four on 18 September 1954: Rowan 1963), Yellow-billed Oxpecker *Buphagus africanus* (mentioned as present by Attwell 1966) and Parasitic Weaver *Anomalospiza imberbis* ('Coll.': no date: Benson 1956). However, there is informal documentation for the 12 others (R. J. Dowsett *in litt.* 2005).

Several ornithologists have visited Kundabwika Falls on the Kalungwishi (09°12'S 29°20'E). Although this site lies just outside the park, 11 species recorded only there, most of them in March 1972 (R. J. Dowsett *in litt.* 2005; see Appendix), have been included on the park list, as the habitat is continuous and the area is so close.

Conservation

In the areas visited, the habitat was relatively undisturbed. There was a general paucity of large mammals but much evidence of medium- and small-sized mammals. A single Reedbuck *Redunca arundinum* was seen on the plain and many areas had been rooted by Bush Pigs *Potamochoerus lar-*

vatus. Numerous antelope tracks were tentatively identified as belonging to Bushbuck *Tragelaphus scriptus*, duikers *Sylvicapra*/*Cephalophus* spp., Lichtenstein's Hartebeest *Alcelaphus* (*buselaphus*) *lichtensteinii* and Roan Antelope *Hippotragus equinus*. Yellow Baboons *Papio cynocephalus* were seen on rocky ridges and Vervet *Cercopithecus pygerythrus*, Blue Monkey *C. nictitans mitis* and Gambian Sun Squirrel *Heliosciurus gambianus* were observed in mushitu. Greater Galagos *Otolemur crassicaudatus* were regularly heard at night.

Traps and snares of subsistence hunters were found in many places, particularly within mushitus. The occasional small but well-used bicycle track suggested that these were checked fairly regularly. Birds most at risk and clearly targeted by such methods were Helmeted Guineafowl *Numida meleagris* and francolins. The occasional tree had been felled, probably for collecting honey, but perhaps the most important conservation issue was the rigorous burning of large sections of the park, affecting all habitats. Despite this, the relatively high number of bird species combined with the large area of relatively undisturbed habitat suggests that the park is a suitable IBA and it has been included as such in Zambia's national inventory (Leonard 2005).

Future field workers are encouraged to explore other areas of the park, particularly in the northwest. Field work at other seasons would also be desirable. In addition, the extensive mushitu along the Mbereshi should be investigated, as this may well prove to be a valuable extension to the IBA.

It is unfortunate that once a national park loses its large mammals, interest in it dwindles. This can lead to a decrease in protection and an increase in human disturbance. It is hoped that by affording Lusenga Plain National Park IBA status, its importance for all other aspects of its flora and fauna will be highlighted.

Acknowledgements

My grateful thanks to Dispencer Chizuwa and Lazaro Hamusikili for their help with field work. Thanks also to the villagers in Tambatamba and near Misapa for all their help and ZAWA staff for their cooperation. Bob Dowsett provided comments and details of some of the historic records.

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Appendix. Bird species recorded in Lusenga Plain National Park.

Annexe. Espèces d'oiseaux recensées dans le Parc National de la Plaine de Lusenga.

Abundance

(+)	=	previously recorded, but not found during this survey
+	=	rarely encountered during this survey, only one or two records in total
++	=	found occasionally, one or two records per day
+++	=	found regularly, several records per day
++++	=	found very frequently, many records per day

Habitat

W	=	woodland (all types)
W(m)	=	miombo
W(d)	=	drier, undifferentiated woodland
F	=	forest (all types)
F(m)	=	mushitu
F(r)	=	riparian forest
K	=	Kalungwishi River and environs (including riparian forest)
O	=	overhead
L	=	Lusenga Plain
S	=	scrub
KF	=	known only from Kundabwika Falls

Species	Abundance	Habitat
Reed Cormorant *Phalacrocorax africanus*	++	K
Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis*	++	K
Green-backed Heron *Butorides striata*	(+)	KF
Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*	+	K
Hamerkop *Scopus umbretta*	++	K
Woolly-necked Stork *Ciconia episcopus*	(+)	-
Saddle-billed Stork *Ephippiorhynchus senegalensis*	(+)	-
Hadada Ibis *Bostrychia hagedash*	++	K
Spur-winged Goose *Plectropterus gambensis*	(+)	-
Yellow-billed Duck *Anas undulata*	(+)	-
Red-billed Teal *Anas erythrorhyncha*	(+)	-
Black/Yellow-billed Kite *Milvus migrans*	+++	K
African Fish Eagle *Haliaeetus vocifer*	++	K
Lappet-faced Vulture *Torgos tracheliotus*	(+)	-

Western Banded Snake Eagle *Circaetus cinerascens*	++	F(m)
Bateleur *Terathopius ecaudatus*	+++	O
African Marsh Harrier *Circus ranivorus*	(+)	-
Dark Chanting Goshawk *Melierax metabates*	++	W, L
African Goshawk *Accipiter tachiro*	++	F
Shikra *Accipiter badius*	++	W(m)
Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo*	(+)	-
Wahlberg's Eagle *Aquila wahlbergi*	++	W, F
Steppe Eagle *Aquila nipalensis*	(+)	-
Ayres's Hawk Eagle *Hieraaetus ayresii*	+	O
Coqui Francolin *Francolinus coqui*	++	W(m)
Red-necked Francolin *Francolinus afer*	++	W
African Blue Quail *Coturnix adansonii*	+	L
Helmeted Guineafowl *Numida meleagris*	++	W
Kurrichane Buttonquail *Turnix sylvaticus*	+	S
Wattled Crane *Bugeranus carunculatus*	+	L
Grey Crowned Crane *Balearica regulorum*	(+)	-
Common Pratincole *Glareola pratincola*	+++	L
Rock Pratincole *Glareola nuchalis*	+++	K
Ruff *Philomachus pugnax*	(+)	-
Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*	(+)	-
Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*	+	L
Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*	++	K
African Green Pigeon *Treron calvus*	++	W(m)
Blue-spotted Wood Dove *Turtur afer*	++	F(m)
Emerald-spotted Wood Dove *Turtur chalcospilos*	+++	W(d)
Red-eyed Dove *Streptopelia semitorquata*	++	F(r)
Schalow's Turaco *Tauraco schalowi*	++	W(m), F
Lady Ross's Turaco *Musophaga rossae*	++	F
Red-chested Cuckoo *Cuculus solitarius*	+++	W(m), F
Black Cuckoo *Cuculus clamosus*	++	W(m)
African Cuckoo *Cuculus gularis*	+++	W(m)
Emerald Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx cupreus*	++	F(m)
Klaas's Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx klaas*	+++	W(m)
Coppery-tailed Coucal *Centropus cupreicaudus*	++	L
White-browed (Burchell's) Coucal *Centropus superciliosus*	++	F, K
African Scops Owl *Otus senegalensis*	+++	W(m)
Southern White-faced Owl *Ptilopsis granti*	+	W(d)
African Barred Owlet *Glaucidium capense*	++	F(r)
African Wood Owl *Strix woodfordii*	+++	F(m)
Fiery-necked Nightjar *Caprimulgus pectoralis*	++	W(m)
Swamp (Natal) Nightjar *Caprimulgus natalensis*	(+)	-
Pennant-winged Nightjar *Macrodipteryx vexillarius*	+++	W
Böhm's Spinetail *Neafrapus boehmi*	(+)	KF
Common Swift *Apus apus*	(+)	KF
White-rumped Swift *Apus caffer*	(+)	KF
Narina's Trogon *Apaloderma narina*	++++	F
Brown-hooded Kingfisher *Halcyon albiventris*	+++	F
Grey-headed Kingfisher *Halcyon leucocephala*	+++	W(m)
Striped Kingfisher *Halcyon chelicuti*	++	W(d)
African Pygmy Kingfisher *Ceyx pictus*	+	F(m)
Half-collared Kingfisher *Alcedo semitorquata*	++	K
Giant Kingfisher *Megaceryle maxima*	++	K
Little Bee-eater *Merops pusillus*	++	W(d)
Blue-breasted Bee-eater *Merops variegatus*	++++	L
Swallow-tailed Bee-eater *Merops hirundineus*	++	W(d)
European Bee-eater *Merops apiaster*	++	O
Southern Carmine Bee-eater *Merops nubicoides*	+++	O
Broad-billed Roller *Eurystomus glaucurus*	++	W(d)
Common Scimitarbill *Rhinopomastus cyanomelas*	++	W
Hoopoe *Upupa epops*	++	W
Southern Ground Hornbill *Bucorvus leadbeateri*	++	W
Crowned Hornbill *Tockus alboterminatus*	++	W(m), F
Pale-billed Hornbill *Tockus pallidirostris*	++	W(m)
Trumpeter Hornbill *Bycanistes bucinator*	++	F(m)
Whyte's Barbet *Stactolaema whytii*	++	W(m)
Yellow-rumped Tinkerbird *Pogoniulus bilineatus*	+++	F
Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird *Pogoniulus chrysoconus*	++	W(m)
Miombo Pied Barbet *Tricholaema frontata*	+	W(m)
Black-backed Barbet *Lybius minor*	++	F(m)
Green-backed Honeybird *Prodotiscus zambesiae*	+++	W(m)
Brown-backed Honeybird *Prodotiscus regulus*	+	W(d)
Scaly-throated Honeyguide *Indicator variegatus*	++	W(m)
Greater Honeyguide *Indicator indicator*	++	W(m)
Lesser Honeyguide *Indicator minor*	++	W, F
Golden-tailed Woodpecker *Campethera abingoni*	+	W(d)
Green-backed Woodpecker *Campethera cailliautii*	+++	F, W(m)
Cardinal Woodpecker *Dendropicos fuscescens*	+	W(d)
Olive Woodpecker *Dendropicos griseocephalus*	++	F(m)
African Broadbill *Smithornis capensis*	+++	F(m)
Flappet Lark *Mirafra rufocinnamomea*	++	W
Dusky Lark *Pinarocorys nigricans*	+	W(m)
Red-capped Lark *Calandrella cinerea*	+	L
Banded Martin *Riparia cincta*	++	L
Grey-rumped Swallow *Pseudhirundo griseopyga*	+++	L
Red-breasted Swallow *Hirundo semirufa*	++	L
Lesser Striped Swallow *Hirundo abyssinica*	++	K
Angola Swallow *Hirundo angolensis*	(+)	KF
Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava*	(+)	-
African Pied Wagtail *Motacilla aguimp*	+++	K
Grassland Pipit *Anthus cinnamomeus*	++	L
Woodland Pipit *Anthus nyassae*	++	W
Plain-backed Pipit *Anthus leucophrys*	+++	L
Fülleborn's Longclaw *Macronyx fuellebornii*	++	L
Rosy-breasted Longclaw *Macronyx ameliae*	++	L
Purple-throated Cuckoo-shrike *Campephaga quiscalina*	++	F(m)
White-breasted Cuckoo-shrike *Coracina pectoralis*	+++	W(m)
Little Greenbul *Andropadus virens*	++++	F
Yellow-throated Leaflove *Chlorocichla flavicollis*	+++	F (r,m)
Grey-olive Greenbul *Phyllastrephus cerviniventris*	+++	F (r,m)
Cabanis's Greenbul *Phyllastrephus cabanisi*	+++	F(m,r)
Common Bulbul *Pycnonotus barbatus*	++	W, F
Bocage's Robin *Sheppardia bocagei*	+++	F(m)
White-browed Robin Chat *Cossypha heuglini*	+++	F
Red-capped Robin Chat *Cossypha natalensis*	++	F(r)
Miombo Scrub Robin *Cercotrichas barbata*	++++	W(m)
White-browed Scrub Robin *Cercotrichas leucophrys*	++	W(d)
Stonechat *Saxicola torquatus*	+++	L
Arnot's Chat *Myrmecocichla arnotti*	+	W(m)
Miombo Rock Thrush *Monticola angolensis*	++	W(m)
African Thrush *Turdus pelios*	+++	F
Kurrichane Thrush *Turdus libonyanus*	+++	W
Evergreen-forest Warbler *Bradypterus lopezi*	+++	F(m)
African Moustached Warbler *Melocichla mentalis*	++	L, K
Broad-tailed Warbler *Schoenicola brevirostris*	+++	L
African Yellow Warbler *Chloropeta natalensis*	+	K
Yellow-bellied Eremomela *Eremomela icteropygialis*	++	W
Green-capped Eremomela *Eremomela scotops*	++++	W
Black-necked Eremomela *Eremomela atricollis*	+++	W(m)
Red-capped Crombec *Sylvietta ruficapilla*	+++	W(m)
Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus*	(+)	KF
Laura's Woodland Warbler *Phylloscopus laurae*	++	F(m)
Yellow-bellied Hyliota *Hyliota flavigaster*	++++	W(m)
Southern Hyliota *Hyliota australis*	+	W(m)
Red-faced Cisticola *Cisticola erythrops*	+++	K
Trilling Cisticola *Cisticola woosnami*	+++	W(m)
Stout Cisticola *Cisticola robustus*	+++	L
Croaking Cisticola *Cisticola natalensis*	++	L
Short-winged Cisticola *Cisticola brachypterus*	++++	W, L
Tabora (Long-tailed) Cisticola *Cisticola angusticauda*	(+)	KF
Pale-crowned Cisticola *Cisticola cinnamomeus*	++	L
Tawny-flanked Prinia *Prinia subflava*	++++	W
Yellow-breasted Apalis *Apalis flavida*	++	F(r)
Grey Apalis *Apalis cinerea*	+++	F(m)
Grey-backed Camaroptera *Camaroptera brachyura*	++	F
Grey Wren Warbler *Calamonastes simplex*	+++	W(m)
Southern Black Flycatcher *Melaenornis pammelaina*	+	W(d)
Pale Flycatcher *Bradornis pallidus*	++	W(d)
Ashy Flycatcher *Muscicapa caerulescens*	+++	F (edge), W(m)

Cassin's Flycatcher *Muscicapa cassini*	+	K
African Dusky Flycatcher *Muscicapa adusta*	+++	F (edge), W(m)
Lead-coloured Flycatcher *Myioparus plumbeus*	+++	F(r), W(d)
African Paradise Flycatcher *Terpsiphone viridis*	+++	W, F
Black-throated Wattle-eye *Platysteira peltata*	+++	F
Chinspot Batis *Batis molitor*	++++	W
White-rumped Babbler *Turdoides leucopygius*	++	K
Rufous-bellied Tit *Parus rufiventris*	+++	W(m)
White-winged Black Tit *Parus leucomelas*	++	W(d)
Grey Penduline Tit *Anthoscopus caroli*	(+)	KF
Spotted Creeper *Salpornis spilonotus*	++	W(m)
Western Violet-backed Sunbird *Anthreptes longuemarei*	++++	W(m)
Anchieta's Sunbird *Anthreptes anchietae*	++++	W(m)
Olive Sunbird *Cyanomitra olivacea*	++++	F (m,r)
Amethyst Sunbird *Chalcomitra amethystina*	++++	W
Collared Sunbird *Hedydipna collaris*	++++	F
Miombo Double-collared Sunbird *Cinnyris manoensis*	++++	W(m)
Purple-banded Sunbird *Cinnyris bifasciatus*	++	K
Yellow-bellied Sunbird *Cinnyris venustus*	+++	F (edge), L
Yellow White-eye *Zosterops senegalensis*	+++	F, W(m)
Common Fiscal *Lanius collaris*	+	L
Many-coloured Bush-shrike *Malaconotus multicolor*	+	F(m)
Sulphur-breasted Bush-shrike *Malaconotus sulfureopectus*	++	W(d)
Black-crowned Tchagra *Tchagra senegalus*	+++	W
Black-backed (Southern) Puffback *Dryoscopus cubla*	++++	W, F
Tropical Boubou *Laniarius aethiopicus*	+++	F
Brubru *Nilaus afer*	+++	W
White Helmet-shrike *Prionops plumatus*	+++	W
Retz's Helmet-shrike *Prionops retzii*	++	W
Eastern Black-headed Oriole *Oriolus larvatus*	+++	W
African Golden Oriole *Oriolus auratus*	++	W
Square-tailed Drongo *Dicrurus ludwigii*	++	F
Fork-tailed Drongo *Dicrurus adsimilis*	+++	W
Splendid Glossy Starling *Lamprotornis splendidus*	++++	F(m,r)
Violet-backed Starling *Cinnyricinclus leucogaster*	+++	F, W
Yellow-billed Oxpecker *Buphagus africanus*	(+)	-
Yellow-throated Petronia *Petronia superciliaris*	+++	W
Chestnut-backed Sparrow Weaver *Plocepasser rufoscapulatus*	(+)	KF
Red-headed Weaver *Anaplectes rubriceps*	+	W
Spectacled Weaver *Ploceus ocularis*	++	F(r)
Holub's Golden Weaver *Ploceus xanthops*	++	K
Dark-backed Weaver *Ploceus bicolor*	++	F(r,m)
Red-collared Widowbird *Euplectes ardens*	+++	L
Marsh Widowbird *Euplectes hartlaubi*	++	L
Grey Waxbill *Estrilda perreini*	+	F(m)
Fawn-breasted Waxbill *Estrilda paludicola*	+++	L
Black-bellied Seedcracker *Pyrenestes ostrinus*	(+)	KF
Red-cheeked Cordon-bleu *Uraeginthus bengalus*	+	W
Red-throated Twinspot *Hypargos niveoguttatus*	+++	F
Orange-winged Pytilia *Pytilia afra*	+++	W
Blue-billed Firefinch *Lagonosticta rubricata*	+++	F (edge)
Jameson's Firefinch *Lagonosticta rhodopareia*	++	S
Black-chinned Quailfinch *Ortygospiza gabonensis*	++++	L
Locust Finch *Paludipasser locustella*	++	L
Bronze Mannikin *Spermestes cucullatus*	++	F (edge), W
Red-backed Mannikin *Spermestes bicolor*	++	F(m)
Parasitic Weaver *Anomalospiza imberbis*	(+)	-
Yellow-fronted Canary *Serinus mozambicus*	+	W
Black-eared Seedeater *Serinus mennelli*	+	W(m)
Cabanis's Bunting *Emberiza cabanisi*	++	W(m)
Golden-breasted Bunting *Emberiza flaviventris*	+++	W

Bird observations from Dabola Prefecture, Guinea

Tom Aversa

Observations ornithologiques de la Préfecture de Dabola, Guinée. Pendant deux visites durant la saison sèche dans la zone de Dabola, Guinée (10°70'N 11°06'W), du 19 au 21 décembre 2002 et du 20 novembre au 5 décembre 2004, 172 espèces d'oiseaux ont été identifiées (voir Annexe 1 pour la liste complète), dont certaines pour lesquelles il n'y a que peu de mentions préalables en Guinée. Celles-ci comprennent l'Œdicnème tachard *Burhinus capensis*, la Tourterelle de l'Adamaoua *Streptopelia hypopyrrha*, le Martinet alpin *Tachymarptis melba*, l'Indicateur de Willcocks *Indicator willcocksi*, le Gobemouche des marais *Muscicapa aquatica*, l'Amarante masqué *Lagonosticta larvata* et le Bruant ortolan *Emberiza hortulana*.

Summary. During two visits in the dry season to the Dabola area, Guinea (10°70'N 11°06'W), from 19 to 21 December 2002 and from 20 November to 5 December 2004, 172 bird species were identified (see Appendix 1), including some with few previous records in the country, namely: Spotted Thick-knee *Burhinus capensis*, Adamawa Turtle Dove *Streptopelia hypopyrrha*, Alpine Swift *Tachymarptis melba*, Willcocks's Honeyguide *Indicator willcocksi*, Swamp Flycatcher *Muscicapa aquatica*, Black-faced Firefinch *Lagonosticta larvata* and Ortolan Bunting *Emberiza hortulana*.

Although the number of ornithological field studies in Guinea has begun to increase in recent years (see, e.g., Nikolaus 2000, Demey & Rainey 2004), the country's avifauna is still relatively poorly known (Robertson 2001). Here I report on bird observations made in Dabola Prefecture, an area not previously investigated by ornithologists, during two visits, from 19 to 21 December 2002 and 20 November to 5 December 2004.

Dabola Prefecture is located nearly in the centre of Guinea, *c.*300 km north-east of Conakry (Fig. 1). Observations were made principally in Balyan-Souroumba (also spelt Balayan-Sourouma) Forest Reserve (10°95'N 10°90'W), at Tinkisso Dam (10°90'N 11°01'W; Fig. 6), and at Limbelanda Lake (10°45'N 11°03'W). Sightings from Dabola town (10°70'N 11°06'W), Bissikrima (a small town *c.*20 km to the north-east), and adjacent lightly cultivated areas were also recorded. Altitudes in the forest reserve average *c.*400 m. Annual rainfall averaged *c.*1,300 mm in the period 1992–2002, with most rain falling in June–October (M. Gauthier pers. comm.). The dry season extends from November until at least March, but permanent streams and a few small rivers continue to flow throughout the period. Habitats visited included secondary gallery forest, wooded savanna, bowal (laterite meadow), agricultural areas, and the two waterbodies mentioned above.

Deforestation pressure in the region has increased as the demand for agricultural land grows, but the Balyan-Souroumba and nearby Sincery (or Sinséri) Oursa Forest Reserves still protect large tracts of dry-forest habitat. These reserves, as well as adjacent unprotected land, include extensive tracts of gallery forest in riparian areas. Predominant tree species include *Pterocarpus erinaceus*, *Isoberlinia doka* and *Lennea acida*. *Vitellaria paradoxa*, *Bombax costatum* and *Parkia biglobosa* are widespread in wooded savanna, with *Afzelia africana* and *Khaya senegalensis* important in galleries. Balyan-Souroumba was set aside in 1943 and Sincery Oursa in 1951, to reduce erosion and provide wood for a railway, constructed by the French, which no longer exists. The forests are currently managed to protect a viable population of Chimpanzee *Pan troglodytes* but recent management goals have more broadly targeted other flora and fauna.

I visited Dabola as a consultant for Winrock International to train forestry agents and hunters from Middle and Upper Guinea, and representatives from two Guinean NGOs, Guinée Ecologie and Programme Chimpanzé, in bird identification, whilst undertaking a preliminary avian inventory of Balyan-Souroumba. This was part of the Expanded Natural Resources Management Activities Project (ENRMA) funded by USAID and constituted the first step towards establishing

a bird monitoring programme in this as well as other co-managed forests in Guinea, and assist with their protection. Bird identification workshops involving classroom and field sessions were presented as part of the Farmer to Farmer programme of the Agence pour la Commercialisation Agricole (ACA).

Methods

Birds were recorded by direct observation with binoculars and a telescope. Efforts were concentrated on gallery forests at Balyan-Souroumba, Tinkisso Dam and Limbelanda Lake (Dadinda Marsh). Observations were made by sight and sound, but all recorded species were visually identified. Tapes with bird recordings were employed occasionally. Nomenclature and taxonomy follow the African Bird Club list.

Results

In total, 172 bird species were recorded during the two visits (Appendix 1). Although the species list is far from exhaustive due to the short period spent in the area and the limited number of sites visited, it is nevertheless expected to include most of the representative dry-season avifauna.

Notes on selected species

Goliath Heron *Ardea goliath*—A single was found on 25 November 2004 perched in treetops at Limbelanda Lake. The species appears to be scarce in Guinea; it has been documented mainly from coastal areas (Richards 1982, Morel & Morel 1988, Altenburg & Van der Kamp 1989, 1991) and inland in Haut Niger National Park (Nikolaus 2000).

Greater Painted-snipe *Rostratula benghalensis*—On 29 November 2004, an adult male on exposed mud at Tinkisso Dam was performing an antagonistic display directed at a pair of Black Crakes *Amaurornis flavirostris* with downy chicks. The spread-wing displays resembled the high-intensity frontal version described by Kirwan (1996), though it also included direct charges at the crakes. It is unclear whether the display was performed to defend a nest. In Senegambia, egg-laying is not thought to occur until January, and egg-laying is unknown in West Africa before that month (Urban *et al.* 1986).

Spotted Thick-knee *Burhinus capensis*—Two were roosting under sparse shrubs near Sekoudala (10°95'N 10°83'W) on 26 November 2004, and a flock of nine was seen at Kolon Bowal (10°90'N 10°92'W) on 3 December 2004 (Fig. 2). Both locations are in Balyan-Souroumba. There is only one previous record for Guinea, from Haut Niger National Park, where one was seen in December 1996 (Nikolaus 2000).

European Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur*—At least 30, perhaps many more, at Limbelanda Lake on afternoons between 24 November and 4 December 2004, either drinking or going to roost. The species was previously only documented from Koundara and Gaoual prefectures, in the north-west (Morel & Morel 1988).

Adamawa Turtle Dove *Streptopelia hypopyrrha*—Observed in 2004 at three fairly widespread locations: at least two near Raffou (10°98'N 10°98'W) on 25 November 2004, and three at Dar-Es-Salem (10°67'N 10°94'W) on 2 December 2004, both secondary forest sites in Balyan-Souroumba, with one at Tinkisso Dam on 3 December (Fig. 5). There is only one previous record for Guinea, in mid-February 2002, on the border with Mali at the confluence of the Bafling and Balé rivers (Dowsett & Dowsett-Lemaire 2005).

Alpine Swift *Tachymarptis melba*—A flock of at least 70 observed over Mount Sourouma on 28 November 2004. The only previous records are from the extreme south-east: 30–40 over Beyla on 21 March and one at Bafing (08°03'N 08°00'W) on 15 April 1985 (Walsh 1987).

Narina's Trogon *Apaloderma narina*—A male was observed in dense riparian gallery forest at Balyan-Souroumba on 1 December 2004. The species is apparently regular north to at least central Guinea: it was also found in similar habitat in Mamou, Labé and Lelouma prefectures, with observations dating back to 1995 (pers. obs.).

Shining-blue Kingfisher *Alcedo quadribrachys*—A single was at Tinkisso Dam on 3 December 2004. The species is probably more widespread in Guinea than presently known (see maps in Fry *et al.* 1988 and Borrow & Demey 2004); I also found it in Mamou Prefecture.

Willcocks's Honeyguide *Indicator willcocksi*—One was seen in open gallery forest below Mt Souroumba (10°52'N 10°60'W) on 28 November 2004. The bird was viewed for an extended period in excellent light from *c.*20 m. It was loosely associating with a mixed-species flock and remained silent and mostly stationary, affording a profile view. It appeared very small and had a very short, stubby bill with a pale base to the lower mandible; there was no submoustachial stripe or white above the bill, and no dark flank streaks were seen. Upperparts were strongly streaked. There is only one previously published record in the country, from the extreme south-east (Demey & Rainey 2004).

Rufous-rumped Lark *Pinarocorys erythropygia*—A single was with a small flock of Sun Larks *Galerida modesta* at Kolon Bowal, on 3 December 2004. There seem to be few records of the species in Guinea: at Dabola, on 6 January 1912 (Klaptocz 1913) and Haut Niger National Park, in December 1996–January 1997 and March 2003 (Nikolaus 2000, R. Demey *in litt.* 2006).

Grey-rumped Swallow *Pseudhirundo griseopyga*—Flocks of up to 20 were seen at various bowals in Balyan-Souroumba between 24 November and 2 December 2004. The species appears fairly widespread in Guinea, though it was first reported in the country as recently in 1994 (Halleux 1994, Demey 1995, Nikolaus 2000, pers. obs.).

Swamp Flycatcher *Muscicapa aquatica*—One was at Limbelanda Lake on 25 November and photographed on 4 December 2004. It made periodic hunting forays over the water from low snags at the edge of the wooded lakeshore, where it was observed at close range. There is only one previous record for Guinea, in mid-February 2002, on the border with Mali at the confluence of the Bafing and Balé rivers (Demey 2002).

Neumann's Starling *Onychognathus neumanni*—At least a dozen were regular at cliffs below Tinkisso Dam. The species is patchily distributed throughout West Africa (Borrow & Demey 2004), but may be locally quite common in Guinea where rocky outcrops, crags and cliffs are available (pers. obs).

Dybowski's Twinspot *Euschistospiza dybowskii*—Found at two locations in Balyan-Souroumba, on 24–25 November 2004. The species appears to be fairly widespread in Guinea: in addition to published localities (Demey & Rainey 2004, Fry & Keith 2004), I had multiple sightings in adjacent Tougué and Labé prefectures.

Black-faced Firefinch *Lagonosticta larvata*—A male was observed in lightly wooded savanna near Berela (10°86'N 10°96'W) in Balayan-Sourouma. There is only one previous record for Guinea, in mid-February 2002, on the border with Mali at the confluence of the Bafing and Balé rivers (Demey 2003).

Exclamatory / Togo Paradise Whydah *Vidua interjecta / togoensis*—An adult male paradise whydah in breeding plumage was observed perched and in flight at a dry bowal. Its tail was extremely long and broad throughout its length, suggesting *V. interjecta*. Red-winged Pytilia *Pytilia phoenicoptera*, this species' host, was the only pytilia encountered at this site. However, as *V. interjecta* and *V. togoensis* can be difficult to separate, the latter cannot be conclusively eliminated.

Ortolan Bunting *Emberiza hortulana*—A single was observed as it landed briefly in a treetop in open gallery forest on 21 December 2002. The only previous records in Guinea are from Mt Nimba and Pic de Fon, in the extreme south-east (Brosset 1984, Demey & Rainey 2004), and from the Fouta Djalon (Jarry 1993, Trolliet & Fouquet 2001), where I recorded the species frequently in Labé Prefecture in December–February.

Discussion

Dabola, located in the forest–savanna transition zone, harbours a varied bird assemblage. The list presented here is undoubtedly far from complete and further exploration of this little-known area at other seasons will undoubtedly yield further discoveries. Limbelanda Lake, a spectacular site for waterbirds, harboured a night roost of at least 300 Black Kites and 1,500 Cattle Egrets, and could also host less-common species. The availability of a natural lake and surrounding wooded swamp providing permanent water year-round (rare in inland Guinea), attracted many locally uncommon waterbirds. As much of the lakeshore was

inaccessible during my visit, boat surveys are recommended to determine the extent of the site's avifauna.

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Captions to plates on opposite page

Figure 1. Location of Balyan-Souroumba Forest Reserve, Dabola Prefecture, Guinea (PEGRN/Winrock)

Localisation de la Forêt Classée de Balyan-Souroumba, Préfecture de Dabola, Guinée (PEGRN/Winrock)

Figure 2. Two Spotted Thick-knees *Burhinus capensis* (of a flock of nine), Kolon Bowal, Dabola Prefecture, Guinea, 3 December 2004 (Tom Aversa)

Deux Œdicnèmes tachards *Burhinus capensis* (faisant partie d'un groupe de neuf oiseaux) au bowal de Kolon, Préfecture de Dabola, Guinée, 3 décembre 2004 (Tom Aversa)

Figure 3. Part of a Black Kite *Milvus migrans* roost at Limbelanda Lake, Dabola Prefecture, Guinea, 4 December 2004. All birds seen well were of the yellow-billed form *M. m. parasitus* (Tom Aversa)

Une partie du dortoir de Milans noirs *Milvus migrans* au lac Limbelanda, Préfecture de Dabola, Guinée, 4 décembre 2004. Tous les oiseaux vus dans de bonnes conditions étaient de la forme à bec jaune *M. m. parasitus* (Tom Aversa)

Figure 4. Western Grey Plaintain-eater *Crinifer piscator* in *Bombax* tree at Kolon Bowal, Dabola Prefecture, Guinea, 3 December 2004 (Tom Aversa)

Touraco gris *Crinifer piscator* dans un Bombax, bowal de Kolon, Préfecture de Dabola, Guinée, 3 décembre 2004 (Tom Aversa)

Figure 5. Adamawa Turtle Dove *Streptopelia hypopyrrha*, Tinkisso Dam, Dabola Prefecture, Guinea, 3 December 2004 (Tom Aversa)

Tourterelle de l'Adamaoua *Streptopelia hypopyrrha* au barrage de Tinkisso, Préfecture de Dabola, Guinée, 3 décembre 2004 (Tom Aversa)

Figure 6. Tinkisso Dam, Dabola Prefecture, Guinea, 21 November 2004 (Tom Aversa)

Le barrage de Tinkisso, Préfecture de Dabola, Guinée, 21 novembre 2004 (Tom Aversa)

Figure 7. Kolon Bowal near Sekoudala, Dabola Prefecture, Guinea, 26 November 2004 (Tom Aversa)

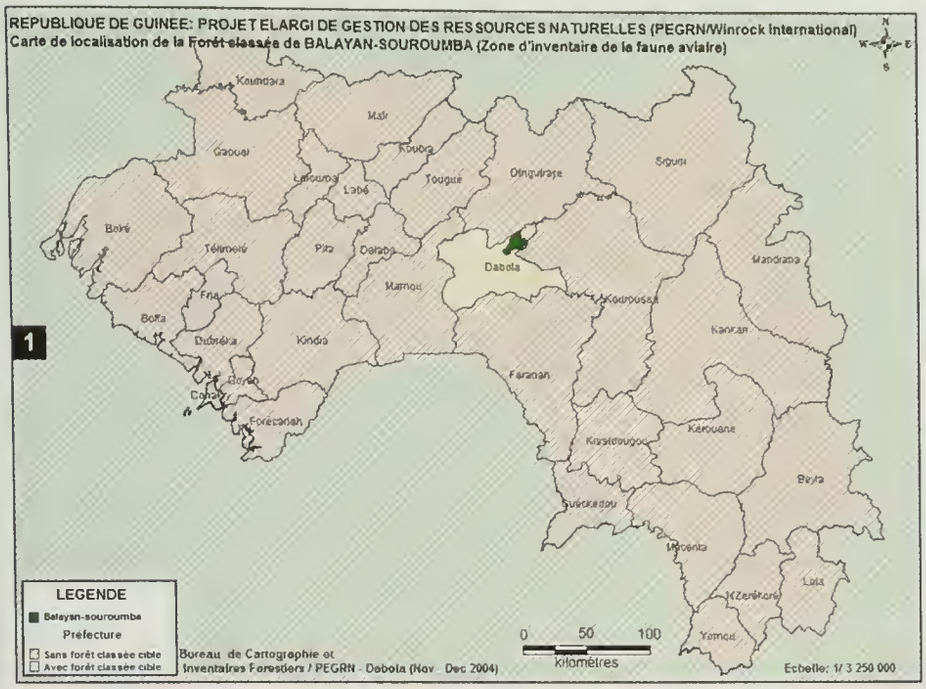
Le bowal de Kolon près de Sekoudala, Préfecture de Dabola, Guinée, 26 novembre 2004 (Tom Aversa)

Figure 8. Near Tinkisso Dam, Dabola Prefecture, Guinea, 21 November 2004 (Tom Aversa)

Les environs du barrage de Tinkisso, Préfecture de Dabola, Guinée, 21 novembre 2004 (Tom Aversa)

Figure 9. Gallery forest, Balyan-Souroumba, Dabola Prefecture, Guinea, 23 November 2004 (Tom Aversa)

Forêt galerie, Balyan-Souroumba, Préfecture de Dabola, Guinée, 21 novembre 2004 (Tom Aversa)


REPUBLIQUE DE GUINEE: PROJET ELARGI DE GESTION DES RESSOURCES NATURELLES (PEGRN/Winrock International)
Carte de localisation de la Forêt classée de BALAYAN-SOUROUMBA (Zone d'inventaire de la faune aviaire)
Koundara
Mali
Gaoual
Koubia
Tougue
Dinguiraye
Siguiri
Lelouma
Labé
Boké
Télimélé
Pita
Dalaba
Dabola
Mandiana
Mamou
Kouroussa
Fria
Boffa
Kankan
Dubréka
Kindia
Faranah
Coyah
Forécariah
Kérouane
Kissidougou
Beyla
Guéckédou
Macenta
Lola
N'Zérékoré
Yomou
LEGENDE
Balaysn-souroumba
Préfecture
Sans forêt classée cible
Avec forêt classée cible
Bureau de Cartographie et Inventaires Forestiers / PEGRN - Dabola (Nov - Dec 2004)
0 50 100
kilomètres
Echelle: 1/ 3 250 000
1


5


2


6


7


3


4


8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Appendix 1. Bird species recorded in Dabola Prefecture, Guinea,19–21 December 2002 and 20 November–5 December 2004.
Annexe 1. Espèces d'oiseaux observées dans la Préfecture de Dabola, Guinée, 19–21 décembre 2002 et 20 novembre –5 décembre 2004.

			Abundance/ Abondance	Habitat
Phalacrocoracidae				
Phalacrocorax africanus	Long-tailed Cormorant	Cormoran africain	U	w
Ardeidae				
Nycticorax nycticorax	Black-crowned Night Heron	Bihoreau gris	U	w
Bubulcus ibis	Cattle Egret	Héron garde-bœufs	C	g,w,t
Butorides striata	Green-backed Heron	Héron strié	F	w
Egretta garzetta	Little Egret	Aigrette garzette	U	w
Egretta intermedia	Intermediate Egret	Aigrette intermédiaire	U	w
Egretta alba	Great White Egret	Grande Aigrette	R	w
Ardea purpurea	Purple Heron	Héron pourpré	U	w
Ardea cinerea	Grey Heron	Héron cendré	F	w
Ardea goliath	Goliath Heron	Héron goliath	R	w
Scopidae				
Scopus umbretta	Hamerkop	Ombrette africaine	C	f,w
Anatidae				
Dendrocygna viduata	White-faced Whistling Duck	Dendrocygne veuf	F	w
Accipitridae				
Elanus caeruleus	Black-shouldered Kite	Elanion blanc	R	g,t
Milvus migrans	Black Kite	Milan noir	C	g,t,a
Gypohierax angolensis	Palm-nut Vulture	Palmiste africain	U	f
Necrosyrtes monachus	Hooded Vulture	Vautour charognard	C	g,t,a
Gyps africanus	African White-backed Vulture	Vautour africain	U	g,a
Polyboroides typus	African Harrier Hawk	Gymnogène d'Afrique	R	f
Circus aeruginosus	Western Marsh Harrier	Busard des roseaux	R	g,w
Micronisus gabar	Gabar Goshawk	Autour gabar	R	f
Melierax metabates	Dark Chanting Goshawk	Autour sombre	F	g
Accipiter badius	Shikra	Epervier shikra	C	g,t

Kaupifalco monogrammicus	Lizard Buzzard	Autour unibande	F	f,g
Buteo auguralis	Red-necked Buzzard	Buse d'Afrique	F	f,g
Lophaetus occipitalis	Long-crested Eagle	Aigle huppard	R	g
Falconidae				
Falco ardosiaceus	Grey Kestrel	Faucon ardoisé	F	g
Falco biarmicus	Lanner Falcon	Faucon lanier	U	g,t
Phasianidae				
Ptilopachus petrosus	Stone Partridge	Poule de roche	U	g
Francolinus bicalcaratus	Double-spurred Francolin	Francolin à double éperon	C	g
Rallidae				
Amaurornis flavirostra	Black Crake	Râle à bec jaune	F	w
Gallinula chloropus	Common Moorhen	Gallinule poule d'eau	R	w
Heliornithidae				
Podica senegalensis	African Finfoot	Grébifoulque d'Afrique	R	w
Jacanidae				
Actophilornis africana	African Jacana	Jacana à poitrine dorée	F	w
Rostratulidae				
Rostratula benghalensis	Greater Painted-snipe	Rhynchée peinte	R	w
Burhinidae				
Burhinus senegalensis	Senegal Thick-knee	Oedicnème du Sénégal	R	w
Burhinus capensis	Spotted Thick-knee	Oedicnème tachard	U	g
Glareolidae				
Pluvianus aegyptius	Egyptian Plover	Pluvian fluviatile	R	w
Charadriidae				
Vanellus senegallus	African Wattled Lapwing	Vanneau du Sénégal	C	g,w
Scolopacidae				
Tringa ochropus	Green Sandpiper	Chevalier culblanc	F	w
Actitis hypoleucos	Common Sandpiper	Chevalier guignette	C	w
Columbidae				
Treron calvus	African Green Pigeon	Columbar à front nu	F	f,g
Treron waalia	Bruce's Green Pigeon	Columbar waalia	F	f,g,t
Turtur abyssinicus	Black-billed Wood Dove	Tourtelette d'Abyssinie	F	f,g
Oena capensis	Namaqua Dove	Tourtelette masquée	R	g
Columba guinea	Speckled Pigeon	Pigeon roussard	C	r,t
Columba livia	Rock Pigeon	Pigeon biset	F	t
Streptopelia semitorquata	Red-eyed Dove	Tourterelle à collier	C	f,g,t
Streptopelia vinacea	Vinaceous Dove	Tourterelle vineuse	C	f,g,t
Streptopelia turtur	European Turtle Dove	Tourterelle des bois	U	w
Streptopelia hypopyrrha	Adamawa Turtle Dove	Tourterelle de l'Adamaoua	U	f,g
Streptopelia senegalensis	Laughing Dove	Tourterelle maillée	C	g,t
Psittacidae				
Poicephalus senegalus	Senegal Parrot	Perroquet youyou	F	f,g
Musophagidae				
Tauraco persa	Green Turaco	Touraco vert	U	f
Musophaga violacea	Violet Turaco	Touraco violet	F	f
Crinifer piscator	Western Grey Plaintain-eater	Touraco gris	F	f
Cuculidae				
Oxylophus levaillantii	Levaillant's Cuckoo	Coucou de Levaillant	R	f
Chrysococcyx caprius	Didric Cuckoo	Coucou didric	U	f,g
Centropus senegalensis	Senegal Coucal	Coucal du Sénégal	C	g
Strigidae				
Otus senegalensis	African Scops Owl	Petit-duc africain	U	t
Ptilopsis leucotis	Northern White-faced Owl	Petit-duc à face blanche	U	t
Caprimulgidae				
Macrodipteryx longipennis	Standard-winged Nightjar	Engoulevent à balanciers	U	g
Apodidae				
Telacanthura ussheri	Mottled Spinetail	Martinet d'Ussher	U	a
Cypsiurus parvus	African Palm Swift	Martinet des palmes	F	a
Apus affinis	Little Swift	Martinet des maisons	F	a
Tachymarptis melba	Alpine Swift	Martinet à ventre blanc	U	a
Trogonidae				
Apaloderma narina	Narina's Trogon	Trogon narina	R	f

Alcedinidae				
Halcyon malimbica	Blue-breasted Kingfisher	Martin-chasseur à poitrine bleue	U	f
Halcyon senegalensis	Woodland Kingfisher	Martin-chasseur du Sénégal	R	f,w
Alcedo cristata	Malachite Kingfisher	Martin-pêcheur huppé	U	w
Alcedo quadribrachys	Shining Blue Kingfisher	Martin-pêcheur azuré	R	w
Megaceryle maxima	Giant Kingfisher	Martin-pêcheur géant	U	w
Ceryle rudis	Pied Kingfisher	Martin-pêcheur pie	F	w
Meropidae				
Merops apiaster	European Bee-eater	Guêpier d'Europe	F	a
Coraciidae				
Coracias naevius	Rufous-crowned Roller	Rollier varié	F	g
Coracias cyanogaster	Blue-bellied Roller	Rollier à ventre bleu	C	g
Coracias abyssinicus	Abyssinian Roller	Rollier d'Abyssinie	U	g
Phoeniculidae				
Phoeniculus purpureus	Green Wood-hoopoe	Irrisor moqueur	C	f,g
Rhinopomastus aterrimus	Black Scimitarbill	Irrisor noir	U	f
Bucerotidae				
Tockus nasutus	African Grey Hornbill	Calao à bec noir	C	f,g,t
Capitonidae				
Pogoniulus chrysoconus	Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird	Barbion à front jaune	C	f,g
Lybius vieilloti	Vieillot's Barbet	Barbican de Vieillot	U	f,g
Lybius dubius	Bearded Barbet	Barbican à poitrine rouge	F	f,g
Indicatoridae				
Indicator indicator	Greater Honeyguide	Grand Indicateur	U	f,g
Indicator willcocksi	Willcocks's Honeyguide	Indicateur de Willcocks	R	f
Picidae				
Campethera punctuligera	Fine-spotted Woodpecker	Pic à taches noires	U	f
Dendropicos fuscescens	Cardinal Woodpecker	Pic cardinal	F	f,t
Dendropicos goertae	Grey Woodpecker	Pic goertan	F	f,t
Picoides obsoletus	Brown-backed Woodpecker	Pic à dos brun	R	f
Alaudidae				
Pinarocorys erythropygia	Rufous-rumped Lark	Alouette à queue rousse	R	g
Galerida modesta	Sun Lark	Cochevis modeste	U	g
Hirundinidae				
Pseudhirundo griseopyga	Grey-rumped Swallow	Hirondelle à croupion gris	F	g
Hirundo daurica	Red-rumped Swallow	Hirondelle rousseline	F	g,w
Hirundo fuligula	Rock Martin	Hirondelle isabelline	U	r
Hirundo leucosoma	Pied-winged Swallow	Hirondelle à ailes tachetées	R	w
Hirundo lucida	Red-chested Swallow	Hirondelle de Guinée	F	g,f,t
Hirundo rustica	Barn Swallow	Hirondelle rustique	R	w
Delichon urbicum	Common House Martin	Hirondelle de fenêtre	F	a
Motacillidae				
Anthus trivialis	Tree Pipit	Pipit des arbres	F	g
Campephagidae				
Campephaga phoenicea	Red-shouldered Cuckoo-shrike	Echenilleur à épaulettes rouges	F	f
Coracina pectoralis	White-breasted Cuckoo-shrike	Echenilleur à ventre blanc	F	f
Pycnonotidae				
Andropadus virens	Little Greenbul	Bulbul verdâtre	R	f
Pycnonotus barbatus	Common Bulbul	Bulbul des jardins	C	f,g,t
Turdidae				
Cossypha niveicapilla	Snowy-crowned Robin Chat	Cossyphe à calotte neigeuse	F	f
Cossypha albicapilla	White-crowned Robin Chat	Cossyphe à calotte blanche	F	f,t
Saxicola rubetra	Whinchat	Tarier des prés	F	g
Turdus pelios	African Thrush	Merle africain	F	f,t
Sylviidae				
Hippolais pallida	Olivaceous Warbler	Hypolaïs pâle	U	f,g
Hippolais polyglotta	Melodious Warbler	Hypolaïs polyglotte	U	f,g
Eremomela pusilla	Senegal Eremomela	Erémomèle à dos vert	U	f,g
Sylvietta brachyura	Northern Crombec	Crombec sittelle	U	f,g
Phylloscopus trochilus	Willow Warbler	Pouillot fitis	F	f,g
Phylloscopus collybita	Common Chiffchaff	Pouillot véloce	U	f,g
Hyliota flavigaster	Yellow-bellied Hyliota	Hyliote à ventre jaune	U	f

Cisticolidae				
Prinia subflava	Tawny-flanked Prinia	Prinia modeste	F	g
Apalis flavida	Yellow-breasted Apalis	Apalis à gorge jaune	U	f
Camaroptera brachyura	Grey-backed Camaroptera	Camaroptère à tête grise	F	f,g
Hypergerus atriceps	Oriole Warbler	Noircap loriot	U	f
Muscicapidae				
Melaenornis edolioides	Northern Black Flycatcher	Gobemouche drongo	F	f,g
Muscicapa aquatica	Swamp Flycatcher	Gobemouche des marais	R	w
Myioparus plumbeus	Grey Tit-flycatcher	Gobemouche mésange	U	f
Ficedula hypoleuca	European Pied Flycatcher	Gobemouche noir	C	f
Monarchidae				
Elminia longicauda	African Blue Flycatcher	Tchitrec bleu	F	f
Terpsiphone viridis	African Paradise Flycatcher	Tchitrec d'Afrique	F	f
Monarchidae				
Platysteira cyanea	Brown-throated Wattle-eye	Pririt à collier	F	f
Batis senegalensis	Senegal Batis	Pririt du Sénégal	R	f
Timaliidae				
Turdoides plebejus	Brown Babbler	Cratérope brun	F	f,g,t
Turdoides reinwardtii	Blackcap Babbler	Cratérope à tête noire	F	f,g,t
Paridae				
Parus leucomelas	White-winged Black Tit	Mésange à épaulettes	U	g
Nectariniidae				
Anthreptes longuemarei	Western Violet-backed Sunbird	Souimanga violet	R	f
Cyanomitra verticalis	Green-headed Sunbird	Souimanga à tête verte	U	f
Chalcomitra senegalensis	Scarlet-chested Sunbird	Souimanga à poitrine rouge	C	f,g,t
Hedydipna platura	Pygmy Sunbird	Souimanga pygmée	U	f,g
Cinnyris pulchellus	Beautiful Sunbird	Souimanga à longue queue	U	t
Cinnyris venustus	Variable Sunbird	Souimanga à ventre jaune	F	f,g
Zosteropidae				
Zosterops senegalensis	Yellow White-eye	Zostérops jaune	F	f,g
Laniidae				
Corvinella corvina	Yellow-billed Shrike	Corvinelle à bec jaune	C	f,g,t
Malaconotidae				
Malaconotus sulfureopectus	Sulphur-breasted Bush-shrike	Gladiateur soufré	R	f,t
Dryoscopus gambensis	Northern Puffback	Cubla de Gambie	F	f
Laniarius barbarus	Yellow-crowned Gonolek	Gonolek de Barbarie	F	f,g
Prionopidae				
Prionops plumatus	White Helmet-shrike	Bagadais casqué	F	f
Oriolidae				
Oriolus auratus	African Golden Oriole	Loriot doré	C	f,g,t
Dicruridae				
Dicrurus ludwigii	Square-tailed Drongo	Drongo de Ludwig	U	f
Dicrurus adsimilis	Fork-tailed Drongo	Drongo brillant	C	f,g,t
Corvidae				
Corvus albus	Pied Crow	Corbeau pie	C	g,t
Ptilostomus afer	Piapiac	Piapiac africain	F	g
Sturnidae				
Onychognathus neumanni	Neumann's Starling	Rufipenne de Neumann	F	r
Lamprotornis purpureus	Purple Glossy Starling	Choucador pourpré	F	g,t
Lamprotornis chalcurus	Bronze-tailed Glossy Starling	Choucador à queue violette	R	g
Lamprotornis chloropterus	Lesser Blue-eared Starling	Choucador de Swainson	F	f,g
Lamprotornis caudatus	Long-tailed Glossy Starling	Choucador à longue queue	F	f,g,t
Passeridae				
Passer griseus	Northern Grey-headed Sparrow	Moineau gris	C	g,t
Petronia dentata	Bush Petronia	Petit Moineau	C	g,t
Ploceidae				
Anaplectes rubriceps	Red-headed Weaver	Tisserin écarlate	U	f
Ploceus nigricollis	Black-necked Weaver	Tisserin à cou noir	F	f
Ploceus cucullatus	Village Weaver	Tisserin gendarme	C	g,t
Estrildidae				
Estrilda caerulescens	Lavender Waxbill	Astrild queue-de-vinaigre	C	f,g,t
Estrilda troglodytes	Black-rumped Waxbill	Astrild cendré	U	f

Uraeginthus bengalus	Red-cheeked Cordon-bleu	Cordonbleu à joues rouges	C	f,g,t
Euschistospiza dybowskii	Dybowski's Twinspot	Sénégali à ventre noir	U	f
Pytilia phoenicoptera	Red-winged Pytilia	Beaumarquet aurore	U	f
Lagonosticta senegala	Red-billed Firefinch	Amarante du Sénégal	C	f,g,t
Lagonosticta larvata	Black-faced Firefinch	Amarante masqué	R	g
Lagonosticta rubricata	African Firefinch	Amarante foncé	U	f,g
Spermestes cucullatus	Bronze Mannikin	Capucin nonnette	C	f,g,t
Viduidae				
Vidua interjecta / togoensis	Exclamatory / Togo Paradise Whydah	Veuve nigérienne / du Togo	R	g
Vidua chalybeata	Village Indigobird	Combassou du Sénégal	U	g
Fringillidae				
Serinus mozambicus	Yellow-fronted Canary	Serin du Mozambique	F	f,g
Emberizidae				
Emberiza hortulana	Ortolan Bunting	Bruant ortolan	R	f

Abundance / Abondance:

C = Common: encountered daily either singly or in significant numbers in appropriate habitat / Commune: observée quotidiennement, seule ou en nombre conséquent

F = Fairly common: encountered on most days in appropriate habitat / Assez commune: observée presque chaque jour

U = Uncommon: irregularly encountered in appropriate habitat and not on the majority of days / Peu commune: observée irrégulièrement et pas tous les jours

R = Rare: rarely encountered—only one or two records / Rare: rarement observée, une ou deux observations

Habitat:

f = gallery forest and heavily wooded savanna / forêt galerie et savane boisée

g = grassland (open fields or very lightly wooded savanna) / prairies

r = rocky areas (massifs with cliffs) / zones rocheuses

w = water (streams, lakes or other open water) / cours d'eau, lacs et autres étendues d'eau

t = towns, large villages and heavily populated areas / villes, grands villages et zones très peuplées

a = aerial and flying overhead / dans les aires et survolant le site

Observations of three little-known bird species in northern Angola

Ian Sinclair[a], *David Chamberlain*[b], *Margot Chamberlain*[b] *and Pedro vaz Pinto*[c]

Observations de trois espèces d'oiseaux peu connues en Angola du nord. Les auteurs rapportent l'observation, lors d'une visite de six jours en Angola du Nord, en janvier–février 2005, de trois espèces dont la protection est d'intérêt mondial: le Gonolek de Braun *Laniarius brauni* (actuellement classé comme Menacé d'extinction), le Cossyphe à tête blanche *Cossypha heinrichi* (Vulnérable) et la Cisticole à queue noire *Cisticola melanurus* (Insuffisamment Documentée). Le gonolek et le cossyphe n'avaient pas été observés dans cette région depuis 1957 et la cisticole depuis 1972.

Summary. We report the observation of Braun's Bush-shrike *Laniarius brauni* (currently listed as Endangered), White-headed Robin Chat *Cossypha heinrichi* (Vulnerable) and Black-tailed Cisticola *Cisticola melanurus* (Data Deficient) during a six-day visit to northern Angola, in January–February 2005. The bush-shrike and the robin chat had not been reported from this region since 1957 and the cisticola not since 1972.

A six-day visit to northern Angola was made between 26 January and 2 February 2005, to search for three little-known bird species of global conservation concern: Braun's Bush-shrike *Laniarius brauni*, an Angolan endemic currently listed as Endangered, the near-endemic White-headed Robin Chat *Cossypha heinrichi*, classified as Vulnerable, and the Data Deficient Black-tailed Cisticola *Cisticola melanurus* (BirdLife International 2000, 2005). The bush-shrike and the robin chat had not been reported from this region since 1957 and the cisticola not since 1972. The 27-year civil war ending only in 2002 was a major factor in the lack of recent field data from this area.

Using the little information we could glean from Dean (2000), Keith *et al.* (1992) and Urban *et al.* (1997), we attempted to visit the type localities of the three species and to search these areas for suitable habitat. The area given for Braun's Bush-shrike, at within 30 km of Quiculungo, Kwanza Norte province (precise locality given as 08°27'S 15°17'E in the type specimen database of the Natural History Museum, Tring, UK), had limited road access due to the civil war. On 30 January we travelled towards this region and examined extensive and pristine forested areas beside the only road north from Quibaxe to Uige town, Uige Province. No Braun's Bush-shrikes were found in the forests at higher elevations (1,200–1,400 m). On descending to lower forested areas (900–1,000 m), we stopped at the approach to Uige town to examine some hirundine flocks for Red-throated Cliff Swallows *Hirundo rufigula*. At this point the road bisects some not very extensive degraded forest, from where the deep, guttural call of a bush-shrike was heard close by. Three pairs of Braun's Bush-shrikes were found in a period of 30–40 minutes and one bird was photographed. Their calls were very similar to both Luhder's *L. luehderi* and Gabela Bush-shrikes *L. amboimensis*, both in their contact-calls and duetting song. This area is 40–60 km north-east of the type locality.

En route to Calandula (formerly known as Duque de Bragança), the nearest town to the type locality of White-headed Robin Chat, we stopped at a bridge crossing the River Luinga, 2 km west of Luinga town, Malanje Province. On 31 January, Lepe Cisticola *C. erythrops lepe* was very common in the long grass adjacent to and in the flooded areas of the river. Although only slightly paler, its call and song were very different from those of Red-faced Cisticola *C. e. erythrops*, the song being more melodious and liquid.

On 1 February, 30 km north of Calandula, we observed the first White-headed Robin Chats. At a nearby village we questioned some elderly locals if they remembered any people who had been shooting birds in the area in the past. They informed us that there had been a large group of Portuguese, with one German amongst them, who had stayed in the area for many months in the 1950s. The villagers had assisted them as porters

and guides whilst they collected birds, mammals and many other things. From this information, we concluded we had found the locality where the German ornithologist Heinrich first collected *Cossypha heinrichi*.

White-headed Robin Chat was first heard singing in the late evening of 31 January. Its song resembles that of White-browed Robin Chat *C. heuglini* in structure, but is much higher pitched and faster. On 1 February one was seen briefly, flying across a track near a small river, and thereafter it was observed in the dense undergrowth whereupon the all-white head, orange underparts and long, graduated tail were clearly seen. On the same day, a further five individuals were observed low down in dense thickets adjacent to the river, where the soft contact-call drew attention to their presence. At rest, they momentarily opened and closed the tail whilst slowly moving it up and down. The song was tape-recorded and the response to its playback was astonishing: two individuals ventured from the undergrowth into the canopy, singing explosively. They flew back and forth across the forest track at a height of 10–15 m, continually fanning and closing their tails. In one instance, a singing bird hovered in mid-air with its body angled at 45°, whilst continuing to fan and close its tail. During this frantic response to playback, one individual was seen flycatching, like a huge African Paradise Flycatcher *Terpsiphone viridis* with a white head. Shortly after sunrise on 2 February, a single White-headed Robin Chat was observed hawking insects from a perch in the canopy, 15 m above ground. Over a stretch of 1.8 km that we explored on the northern bank of the small river, we encountered 5–8 individuals, with a further two on the south bank. This forest patch was highly disturbed, being close to two villages whose inhabitants used the river almost all day for ablutions and collecting water. The gallery forest was degraded and reduced along the river, with cultivation encroaching all around. It was most surprising to find the species tolerant of such habitat degradation and disturbance, and also to be so common.

The gallery forest frequented by White-headed Robin Chat was surrounded by climax and more open miombo woodland that held many bird species typical of the habitat. We searched for Black-tailed Cisticola, an endemic of well-developed miombo woodland, and discovered a pair on 2 February. We observed its unusual foraging behaviour: it crept amongst the leaves and outer extremities of the foliage in the canopy, in the company of hyliotas and eremomelas. Its long, black tail was obvious, whilst its peculiar wing-flicking and snapping was also noticed. This was not continual but only occurred when the bird was agitated or disturbed. It was not the exaggerated wing-snapping, branch-hopping and tail-swinging of the São Tomé Prinia *Prinia molleri*, with which this species has been compared (Sinclair & Ryan 2003).

Further exploration is needed to more accurately establish the conservation status of these three species. Braun's Bush-shrike and White-headed Robin Chat were both relatively easy to find and appeared locally common in the small areas explored. Black-tailed Cisticola was also located after a short search, but only one pair was seen.

GPS localities and sound-recordings of some species mentioned in this note are available at The British Library's National Sound Archive, London, UK.

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The western population of Short-clawed Lark *Certhilauda chuana* in South Africa revisited

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La population occidentale de l'Alouette à ongles courts *Certhilauda chuana* en Afrique du Sud réévaluée. L'Alouette à ongles courts *Certhilauda chuana*, espèce endémique de l'Afrique australe, est restreinte au sud-est du Botswana et les provinces North-west, Northern Cape et Limpopo de l'Afrique du Sud. Les auteurs rapportent les résultats d'un inventaire de l'aire de distribution de l'Alouette à ongles courts dans les provinces North-west et Northern Cape, Afrique du Sud. Cette zone représente la limite est et sud de la population occidentale de l'espèce. *C. chuana* n'a été notée que dans deux des 29 carrés dans lesquels elle avait été notée pendant le Projet de l'Atlas des Oiseaux de l'Afrique australe (SABAP). Des observations non publiées indiquent que l'espèce pourrait aussi être présente dans six carrés supplémentaires, quoique à des densités très basses. Cette réduction apparente de l'aire de distribution peut être attribuée à plusieurs facteurs, parmi lesquels l'agriculture, l'expansion urbaine, les exigences biologiques et écologiques de l'espèce, et des erreurs d'identification pendant la période SABAP. Le déplacement récent de l'espèce de la catégorie de conservation 'Quasi menacé' à celle de 'Préoccupation mineure' devrait être revue d'urgence.

Short-clawed Lark *Certhilauda chuana* is a southern African endemic that occurs in two isolated populations, a large western and a smaller eastern population. The western population is widespread in the arid savannas of south-east Botswana and the North West, Northern Cape and north-western Free State provinces of South Africa (Herremans 1997); it occupies a maximum area of *c.*54,000 km² (Barnes 2000). The eastern population is largely restricted to the Polokwane Plateau, Limpopo province, South Africa, and has a maximum range of *c.*10,650 km² (Barnes 2000). The species is variously listed in Red Data publications as 'indeterminate' (Brooke 1984), 'rare' (Siegfried *et al.* 1976), Near Threatened (Collar *et al.* 1994, Barnes 2000) and Least Concern (BirdLife International 2004). Listing as a Red Data species is primarily due to its relatively small global range (Barnes 2000). The stronghold lies in the rural areas of south-eastern Botswana, where over 10,000 pairs might occur (Herremans 1993).

As part of an ongoing research project into the biology, ecology and conservation of the Short-clawed Lark, funded by the University of Limpopo, we surveyed the range of the western population in South Africa. During the Southern African Bird Atlas Project (SABAP) period, this population was recorded in 76 grid squares, of which 29 (38%) squares are either wholly or partially in South Africa (see Herremans 1997). We surveyed all 29 of these. Two surveys were conducted during the 2004/2005 breeding season: the first in September–October 2004 (11 days) and the second in March 2005 (ten days). Survey results were supplemented by information obtained through interviews with residents, local birdwatchers, bird guides and ornithologists in the region.

Within each grid square, we searched for suitable habitat, i.e. areas that are sparsely vegetated with short grass and scattered small shrubs and trees, especially *Acacia tortilis* (Fig. 1). Once suitable habitat was located, we travelled at 30–40 km/h, stopping regularly to search for and/or listen for the birds. We also surveyed suitable habitat in grid squares where the species was not recorded during the SABAP.

Results

Despite intensive search efforts, we found the species in only two of the grid squares, 2525DA and 2624BC, in which it was recorded during the SABAP. Interviews with various observers familiar with the species suggested that Short-clawed Larks might also be present in six squares where the species was not recorded during the SABAP: 2624DD and 2724BB (L. van Niewenhuizen pers. comm), 2824CB (W. Sinclair pers. comm.), 2824CC and 2824CD (M. Anderson & W. Pike pers. comm.), and 2824DC (W. Sinclair pers. comm.). In these squares, except 2525DA, the species appears to occur at extremely low densities or to be seasonal, nomadic or erratic in occur-

rence. In all squares, except 2525DA, in which they were recorded, the number of territorial males observed was 1–8 individuals. In contrast to these low densities, we estimate that there are *c.*150 territorial males in grid 2525DA. These birds are almost entirely restricted to Botsalano Nature Reserve.

Discussion

The findings of our survey have important implications for the conservation of the Short-clawed Lark in South Africa. Not only does the western population appear to have experienced a dramatic range contraction in the last decade, but the species now also occurs at extremely low densities in all but one of the squares (2525DA), wherein it was only common in and immediately adjacent to the western boundary of Botsalano Nature Reserve. We failed to find any Short-clawed Larks further than 500 m from the reserve boundary. Botsalano Nature Reserve is close to the Pitsane area of Botswana, reportedly one of the species' strongholds (Herremans 1997). We surveyed the rural areas adjacent to Pitsane on the South African side of the border but failed to find any Short-clawed Larks. However, this apparent range reduction and possible decline in numbers in South Africa may be an artefact of the present survey. The area surveyed was restricted to the southern and easternmost limits of the western range, and may therefore represent marginal habitat which could explain the apparent erratic occurrence of the larks in these areas.

Several squares, notably 2327CA, 2426CA, 2426CB, 2426CC, 2426CD and 2526AB, held no suitable habitat: they were characterised by broadleaf woodland and/or areas with severe bush encroachment (Fig. 2). According to Brooke (1984), Short-clawed Lark is associated with *Tarchonanthus* savanna in South Africa. Despite intensive searching, we did not find the species in this vegetation type. Given the structure of this habitat, we believe it is unlikely to be suitable for Short-clawed Larks. Additional research is recommended to determine the precise habitat preferences of the species.

The species' presence in the south of its range appears to be very erratic. Most records are from the summer, i.e. the breeding season, when males are more vocal and their display-flights facilitate detection. However, even in the non-breeding season Short-clawed Larks can be found in suitable habitat, as they are resident and occupy territories year-round, giving their characteristic territorial song all year (Herremans & Herremans 1992, Engelbrecht 2005). Their seasonal and erratic appearance is therefore puzzling and requires further study. The species' preference for open savanna with short-grass cover, as usually attained under continuous grazing pressure, may occasionally inhibit its ability to occupy a given area on a permanent basis. If, on the one hand, the heavily grazed areas it prefers are not managed properly, this may result in overgrazing and/or bush-encroachment, rendering the habitat unsuitable. On the other hand, if grazing and fire is withheld from suitable habitat, the grass will rapidly reach a climax state and the vegetation will become too dense, which will also make habitat unsuitable. This could explain why Short-clawed Larks are only common in the Botsalano and Polokwane nature reserves, where grazing pressure is continuous and properly managed fire programmes exist.

In light of the above, we have identified the following probable contributors to the species' apparent range contraction in South Africa.

Commercial agriculture

The natural vegetation in many of the squares has been altered or destroyed for crop farming, mainly maize and sunflower, leaving only small, isolated patches of natural habitat. The dynamic habitats associated with commercial crop farming are unsuitable for continuous inhabitancy by Short-clawed Larks, hence their absence from these areas. The use of pesticides may also affect them negatively.

Pastures

Vast areas within the species' range are cleared, ploughed and planted with pasture grasses, including *Digitaria*, *Chloris*, *Cenchrus* and various *Eragrostis* cultivars (Fig. 3). This form of monoculture undoubtedly has a detrimental impact on the species.

Subsistence agriculture

The main areas with traditional agricultural practices, e.g. dry-land crop farming and grazing by livestock, are found in squares 2426CA, 2426CC, 2525BB, 2525CD, 2525DA, 2525DC, 2526AB, 2625AD and 2625CB. These are generally characterised by over-grazed areas with many stunted

Figure 1. The preferred habitat of Short-clawed Lark *Certhilauda chuana*, Botsalano Nature Reserve, North West province, 10 March 2006 (Joe Grosel)

L'habitat préféré de l'Alouette à ongles courts *Certhilauda chuana*, Réseve naturelle de Botsalano, province North West,10 mars 2006 (Joe Grosel)

Figure 2. Severe bush encroachment characterises many squares towards Gaborone. Supingstad, North West Province, 11 March 2005 (Derek Engelbrecht)

Une importante 'mise en valeur' agricole du bush caractérise beaucoup de carrés vers Gaborone. Supingstad, province North West, 11 mars 2005 (Derek Engelbrecht)

bushes and very few large shrubs or trees. Herremans & Herremans (1992) described recently fallow land that is heavily grazed by livestock with coppiced thorn trees as the typical habitat of the species in south-east Botswana. Despite the species' relative abundance in and immediately adjacent to Botsalano Nature Reserve (2525DA), we failed to find it in areas where traditional rural agricultural practices were practised. Although we did not cross the border into Botswana, a concerted search took place adjacent to Pitsane, where the habitat matches that described above and Short-clawed Lark is reportedly fairly common. Although we found numerous other lark and pipit species, e.g. Rufous-naped Lark *Mirafra africana*, Sabota Lark *Calendulauda*

Figure 3. Pastures (foreground), crop production (left back) and development (horizon), amongst others, threaten the preferred habitat (behind first row of trees) and ultimately the survival of the western population of the Short-clawed Lark *Certhilauda chuana* in South Africa. Wolmaransstad, North West province, 10 March 2005 (Derek Engelbrecht)

Paturages (en avant-plan), cultures (à gauche en arrière-plan) et expansion urbaine (à l'horizon) menacent l'habitat préféré de l'Alouette à ongles courts *Certhilauda chuana* (derrière la première rangée d'arbres) en Afrique du Sud. Wolmaransstad, province North West, 10 mars 2005 (Derek Engelbrecht)

sabota, Spike-heeled Lark *Chersomanes albofasciata*, Long-billed Pipit *Anthus similis*, Buffy Pipit *A. vaalensis* and African Pipit *A. cinnamomeus*, we failed to find any Short-clawed Larks.

Bush encroachment due to poor land management was evident in several squares, being particularly severe in 2426CA, 2426CB, 2426CC, 2426CD, 2526AB and 2525BB, and it is difficult to comprehend that these areas could have presented suitable habitat for the species, even during the SABAP period (Fig. 2).

Development

Although the western population of Short-clawed Lark occurs in relatively remote areas, changes in land-use within its range may affect the species detrimentally. Mining and urban expansion, e.g. around Mafekeng, Kimberley, Madibogo and Setlagole, have destroyed large areas of suitable habitat.

Misidentification

Unless calling or displaying, Short-clawed Lark is not easy to identify, having until recently been erroneously described in the literature, as noted by

Herremans (1997). It is most easily confused with Long-billed Lark *Certhilauda curvirostris*, Sabota Lark, Rufous-naped Lark, Long-billed Pipit and Buffy Pipit. Although SABAP records were carefully checked (Herremans 1997), we feel that a number may nevertheless have reflected misidentifications. Our view is supported by R. Nuttal (pers. comm.) and B. Colahan (pers. comm.) who question the validity of Short-clawed Lark records from Free State. Apart from an unconfirmed sighting of a Short-clawed Lark in Sandveld Nature Reserve in March 2000 (R. Nuttal pers. comm.), there have been, as far as we can establish, no records of the species in Free State Province since the SABAP.

Short-clawed Lark's biology and ecology

The species' apparently narrow biological and ecological requirements could also explain its erratic appearance or its absence from apparently suitable habitat in certain parts of its range. As mentioned above, Short-clawed Larks prefer open areas of short grass interspersed with small shrubs or trees. When the area they occupy becomes unsuitable due to either overgrazing and concomitant bush-encroachment, or insufficient grazing pressure resulting in excessively lush vegetation, they will vacate it, leading to birds being encountered in squares where they were not recorded during the SABAP. The species' poor dispersal and colonising abilities, on the other hand, may explain why apparently suitable habitat remains vacant for years.

Conclusion

With a new South African Bird Atlas project in the pipeline, we urge the coordinators to carefully vet all Short-clawed Lark records to ensure an accurate representation of the species' present distribution. The possible misidentification of birds during the SABAP period may have led to a 'false sense of security'. A more intensive survey, including the species' range in Botswana, is necessary to determine whether the apparent range reduction is real and, if so, what its full extent is and the causes. The recent downgrading of the species' conservation status to Least Concern (BirdLife International 2004) should be reconsidered as a matter of urgency. We also recommend an intensive monitoring programme for the western population.

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New breeding records of Roseate Tern *Sterna dougallii* in Seychelles

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Nouvelles données sur la nidification de la Sterne de Dougall *Sterna dougallii* aux Seychelles. La plus grande colonie de Sternes de Dougall *Sterna dougallii* aux Seychelles se trouve sur l'île Aride avec un petit nombre de couples qui nichent sur l'Île aux Fous toute proche, et on trouve des colonies plus petites dans les îles éloignées Etoile et Bancs africains. L'espèce a disparu de beaucoup d'îles où elle nichait dans le passé. Dans le cadre du recensement d'oiseaux marins dans les îles éloignées des Seychelles lancé par la Fondation pour la Conservation des Îles (Island Conservation Society, ICS), la nidification de cette sterne a maintenant été confirmée sur l'île de Goëlettes (atoll de Farquhar) pour la première fois depuis 1897, avec la découverte d'une petite colonie de 15 couples. Une colonie auparavant inconnue a également été découverte sur l'atoll de St Joseph, avec 350 couples sur l'île Chien et trois couples sur l'île Ressource. Des prospections complémentaires sont prévues par ICS afin de recenser toutes les populations nicheuses d'oiseaux marins des îles éloignées des Seychelles, en particulier à l'île Bancs du Sud, sur l'atoll de Providence, où l'information manque depuis 1970. L'atoll de Saint Joseph est proposé comme une Zone Importante pour la Conservation des Oiseaux.

Summary. The largest colony of Roseate Terns *Sterna dougallii* in Seychelles is on Aride Island, with a small number of breeding pairs on neighbouring Booby Island; smaller colonies are also present in the outer islands at Etoile and African Banks. The species has disappeared from many islands where it was previously recorded. As part of the Outer Island Seabird Survey, launched by Island Conservation Society (ICS) of Seychelles, breeding has now been confirmed at Goëlettes, Farquhar, for the first time since 1897, with the discovery of a small colony of 15 pairs. A previously unknown colony has been discovered at St Joseph Atoll, with 350 pairs at Île Chien and three pairs on Île Ressource. Further work is planned by ICS to assess seabird populations in the outer islands of Seychelles, including at Bancs du Sud (Providence Atoll), where there has been no report of Roseate Terns since 1970. St Joseph Atoll is proposed as an Important Bird Area.

Although the Roseate Tern *Sterna dougallii* is not considered globally threatened, its populations have declined dramatically throughout most of its range during recent decades (Avery *et al.* 1995, Gochfeld & Burger 1996), and it is one of the rarest breeding seabirds in the Indian Ocean. A recent genetic study of seven populations from throughout the world, including Seychelles and South Africa, indicates two distinct lineages, one in the Atlantic and another in the Indo-Pacific, with continental Africa acting as a barrier to gene-flow (Lashko 2004). Given this finding, it has been suggested that the 3–4 currently recognised subspecies in the Indo-Pacific should be merged under the name *S. d. gracilis*, although Seychelles breeders appear divergent from those of the eastern Indian Ocean and Pacific Ocean (Tree 2005). There are apparently two major populations in the western Indian Ocean, one usually recognised as *S. d. arideensis*, breeding from Seychelles south to Cargados Carajos, and the other an intermediate form, genetically similar to the Atlantic nominate race, in Madagascar, East Africa and South Africa. Geographical variation mainly involves bill colour when breeding, with Seychelles birds having up to 100% red bills (Malling Olsen & Larsson 1995).

Known Roseate Tern colonies in Seychelles

The largest colony in Seychelles is on Aride Island. In 1973, when Aride was acquired as a nature reserve, 2,500 pairs were present (Procter 1974). The population rose to 4,300–4,800 pairs in 1975 (Warman 1977, 1979), then declined to 900–1,000 pairs in 1988 (Bullock 1988), reaching a low point of 426 pairs in 1994 (Ayrton 1995). In the present century, the population has varied between 607 pairs in 2004 and 1,276 pairs in

2002 (Monticelli & Ramos 2005), with 779 pairs in 2005 (D. Monticelli *in* Carty & Carty 2005). Elsewhere in the western Indian Ocean, major colonies with more than 1,000 pairs have been reported from Madagascar and East Africa (Langrand 1990, Fishpool & Evans 2001).

A small number of birds attempt to breed in most years on Booby Island, 3 km south of Aride, with 128 pairs present in 2003 and 89 in 2004 (Monticelli & Ramos 2005), but only 17 pairs in 2005 (D. Monticelli *in* Carty & Carty 2005). Booby Island is theo-retically protected as a nature reserve, declared under the Wild Birds Protection (Nature Reserve) Regulations 1966, but it is uninhabited and heavily poached. As a result it is unlikely that there has been any successful breeding in recent years.

Apart from Aride and Booby in the granitic islands, the only known breeding sites in Seychelles at the turn of the 21st century were in the coralline outer islands, at African Banks and Etoile. The African Banks colony numbered 250–300 pairs in 1966 (Ridley & Percy 1966) but only 82 pairs by 1997 (C. J. Feare, P. Constance & R. Nolin pers. comm.). Etoile has not been visited by an ornithologist since 1995 when *c.*150 pairs were present (Skerrett 1995). Like Booby, Etoile is a nature reserve under the 1966 regulations, whilst African Banks receives a degree of legal protection as an area of restricted access. However, both are also uninhabited, thus there is no control of unauthorised visits. It is known that tern colonies on African Banks are heavily poached and it would be surprising if this is not also the case on Etoile.

Roseate Terns may also breed at Bancs du Sud, Providence Atoll, where nests with chicks were last observed in 1970 (G. Savy pers. comm.). There have been no visits by an ornithologist during the breeding season since. A few birds were recorded on Cosmoledo (two individuals in June 1999 on Menai: Rocamora *et al.* 2003), but without evidence of breeding. Historically, colonies of Roseate Terns have disappeared from the islands of Mamelles, Île Sèche, Île aux Récifs, Île aux Vaches Marines, Bird, and probably others. Roseate Terns were noted on Mamelles, where breeding was reported in 1936 (Vesey-Fitzgerald 1936), but by 1955 they had disappeared (Ridley & Percy 1956). Île aux Vaches Marines is mentioned as having 'a large colony of Roseate Terns' in 1955

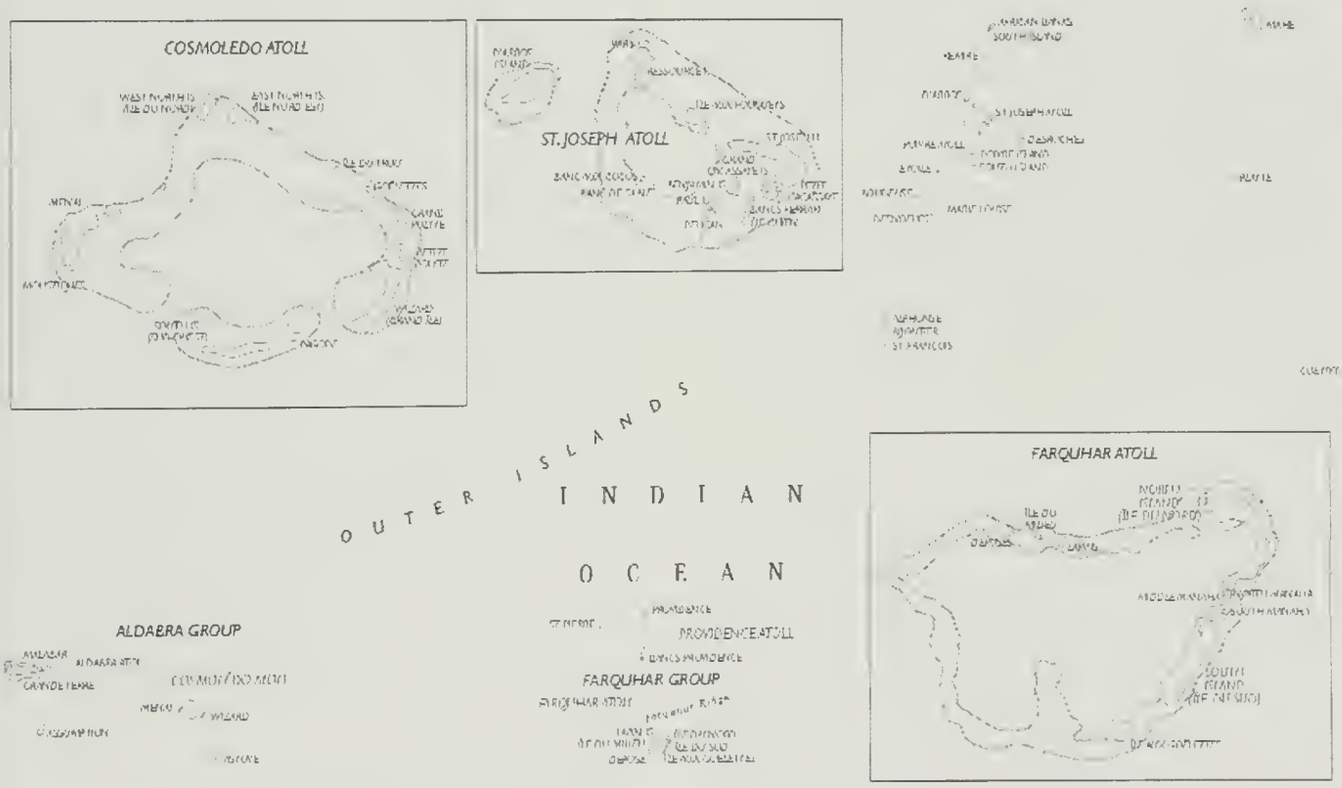

Figure 1. Map of Seychelles showing the major localities mentioned in the text (reproduced with kind permission of A. & C. Black).

Carte des Seychelles avec les localités les plus importantes mentionnées dans le texte (reproduite avec l'autorisation de A. & C. Black).

(Ridley & Percy 1958), but breeding ceased during the mid-1980s, the last record being in 1982 (Skerrett 1994). Île Sèche and Île aux Récifs are mentioned in some references as breeding sites, though without details. The Cargados Carajos population has been estimated at 400 pairs (Safford 2001). The all-red bill colour suggests a close relationship with Seychelles birds.

Island Conservation Society (ICS) and the Outer Island Seabird Survey

Island Conservation Society, a Seychelles NGO, leases and manages Aride Island Nature Reserve, where it conducts annual surveys of the Roseate Tern colony in collaboration with Dr Jaime Ramos of Coimbra University, Lisbon, Portugal. ICS has also been mandated as conservation partners to the Islands Development Company (IDC), the Seychelles parastatal responsible for management of the outer islands (coralline islands west and south of the main island of Mahé), except Aldabra Atoll (managed by Seychelles Islands Foundation), Coëtivy (a prawn farm operated by Seychelles Marketing Board) and the privately owned D'Arros and St Joseph Atoll.

ICS has identified the Outer Island Seabird Survey as a priority programme for 2004–09, with a view to censusing all seabird populations in the outer islands of Seychelles. Islands are visited opportunistically, utilising the transport facilities of IDC, but funding is being sought for additional visits. To date, IDC has facilitated visits to some islands including Cosmoledo Atoll and Farquhar Atoll. D'Arros Development Limited has facilitated an initial visit to D'Arros and St Joseph Atoll.

Rediscovery of a small breeding colony on Farquhar

On 10 July 1897, Cmdr. Stuart Farquhar visited Goëlettes, Farquhar Atoll, one of the ten islands comprising the atoll and the most southerly point of Seychelles. (Despite the coincidence of surnames, it is not Stuart Farquhar who is honoured by the name of the atoll, but Sir Robert Townsend Farquhar, Governor of Mauritius in 1810–23.) He reported a dense colony of Roseate Terns, with some nests having one, two or even three eggs, and a few with chicks (Farquhar 1900). There were no further visits by any ornithologist at this season and no reports of Roseate Terns at Farquhar for a century.

On 25 June 1999, we visited Goëlettes for less than two hours with C. J. Feare, E. Greig and M. Athanase. The 26-ha large island is mainly flat, with a few sand dunes and a small crater, reportedly caused by a meteorite. Whilst other members of the party concentrated on a rapid assessment of the large Sooty Tern *S. fuscata* colony, AS walked the perimeter of the island using two hand-held GPS devices to measure the island's size and shape, and to make general observations of nesting terns. A flock of *c.*50 Roseate Terns was found close to the high-tide line but with no evidence of nesting (Skerrett 1999). Although birds can be expected to have eggs or chicks at this time of year, the apparent absence of these does not prove that breeding was not attempted in 1999, as a shortage of time prevented a thorough investigation of all potential sites (including the small sandy island of Banc de Sable).

GR visited Goëlettes again on 21–24 June 2005 with T. Cafrine and G. Maillet from IDC. More than 330,000 pairs of Sooty Terns occupied most of its centre, with thousands of pairs of Brown Noddies *Anous stolidus* nesting at the edges of the colony. Roseate Terns were flying amidst hundreds of Sooty Terns and Brown Noddies. Fifteen rudimentary and well-camouflaged nests, merely small depressions in a sparsely vegetated sand dune, were located in a small area not exceeding *c.*20 m × 5 m, a few metres from the beach at the north-western side of the island. They were 1–3 m apart and 11 contained single small brownish eggs with blackish marks. On the beach, 20 m distant, were three adult Black-naped Terns *Sterna sumatrana* feeding three recently fledged juveniles. T. Cafrine (pers. comm.) confirmed he had counted *c.*15 chicks of this species a few weeks previously in the same area.

The breeding success of the Roseate Terns could not be checked later in the season and we do not know whether the 11 eggs hatched. If so, the heavy infestation of ticks on Goëlettes at the time of our visit may have occasioned a serious mortality, as it did on Sooty Tern chicks in this year (pers. obs.).

Discovery of an unknown colony on St Joseph Atoll

On 21 July 2005 AS and Judith Skerrett visited St Joseph Atoll (Skerrett & Skerrett 2005), first landing on the island of Ressource. Five Roseate Terns

were observed, three of which were incubating eggs. Eight Black-naped Terns *Sterna sumatrana*, four of them incubating eggs, were nesting colonially with the Roseate Terns.

The next day, the islands in the east of the atoll were visited. A colony of Roseate Terns was found on the island of Chien. In order not to cause disturbance, it was circled in the boat at a distance sufficient for birds not to leave their eggs. Approximately 500 individuals were counted. It should be noted, however, that not all the birds in the colony were likely to be present and that the count was complicated because the colony was not visible in its entirety from any single point due to vegetation and the topography of the beach.

The impression from this short visit was that the density of nests was very high, particularly at the edge of the colony, but variable and interrupted in places by the profile of the beach or by flotsam debris. The colony covered an area of *c.*50 m × *c.*3.5 m, equal to 175 m^2. The mean density was roughly estimated at *c.*2 pairs per 1 m^2, equal to a population of *c.*350 pairs. On Aride, nest density varies from 1.23/m^2 at the centre of the colony to 0.63/m^2 at the edge, with a mean distance of *c.*0.5 m from the nearest neighbour (Ramos 1998). In Africa, nest density is 0.2–4.0/m^2 (Urban *et al.* 1986). The proportion of nests with two eggs was high, perhaps *c.*30%, though this is a very rough estimate based only on a small area of the colony.

This is the first record of Roseate Terns breeding at St Joseph Atoll. It remains to be established if this colony is occupied annually. However, there are earlier observations of Roseate Terns in the vicinity. Betts (1998) reported observing 420 Roseate Terns feeding a mile north of St Joseph on 10 June 1998. He estimated this might indicate a colony of 300–400 pairs somewhere in the northern Amirantes. In the light of the new evidence, it seems likely that the birds observed by Betts came from St Joseph Atoll; his estimate is remarkably similar to the current one.

Threats and conservation

The future of the Roseate Tern as a breeder in Seychelles has been a cause of great concern, the Aride colony being the only one given any degree of protection by resident conservation staff. Roseate Terns are prone to human disturbance, especially early in the breeding season when entire colonies may desert. Direct human predation has eliminated the species from much of its former range, especially due to egg collecting. Rats and other introduced predators may also have contributed to the decline. Problems with food supply appear to be the main factor affecting breeding success, which could be linked to overexploitation of inshore fishing stocks, or changes in water temperature and ocean currents (Ramos 2000).

Introduced Barn Owls *Tyto alba* have preyed on Roseate Terns on Aride, accounting for 4% of the breeding population in 1993 (Ayrton 1995), but following implementation of control measures, in 1996, losses have been virtually eliminated (Bowler & Hunter 2000), except in 2006 when 42 adults were killed by a single owl (B. Sampson pers. comm.). *Pisonia* seeds are a potential hazard as they stick to feathers, preventing flight; therefore, staff check colonies on Aride for fallen seed piles prior to the nesting season. Heavy tick infestation may kill many young, with fledging success of tick-infested nestlings being less then half that of non-infested nestlings in some years; ironically, frequent breeding failures result in lower infestation in subsequent years which benefits the birds (Ramos *et al.* 2001). Interbreeding grounds of Seychelles birds are unknown and the possibility of significant mortality due to certain fishing practices or trapping outside the region remains, as is the case in West Africa (e.g. Rocamora *et al.* 1993).

The rediscovery of a small colony on Goëlettes and the discovery of a significant colony on St Joseph Atoll is extremely encouraging. None of the islands is inhabited and they are conservation-friendly, being managed by nearby human residents.

Future monitoring and research

On Farquhar, ICS plans to monitor regularly (every 1–2 years) the numbers of breeding pairs of Roseate Terns and other ground-nesting terns (Sooty Tern, Brown Noddy, Black-naped Tern and possibly Greater Crested Tern *Sterna bergii*) on Goëlettes or other rat-free islands of the atoll.

On St Joseph a more precise population estimate is needed and we recommend that the newly discovered Roseate Tern colony be monitored annually. Difficulty of access to St Joseph Atoll (easily accessible only during spring tides) and a total absence of infrastructure on the islands limit

considerably the possibilities for any close monitoring and research. It would nevertheless be highly desirable to investigate the existence of possible exchanges with Aride through ringing, and to assess periodically the breeding success of the colony and the factors that affect it.

Roseate Terns and Important Bird Areas (IBAs)

Goëlettes is already recognised as a part of the 'Islets of Farquhar Atoll' Important Bird Area (Rocamora & Skerrett 2001), as threshold criteria for Sooty Tern and Black-naped Tern are met. Despite being very small, the Roseate Tern colony of Goëlettes increases the ornithological interest of this IBA and adds a breeding site to the species' distribution. Future monitoring will demonstrate whether this colony is regularly occupied or not. Aride Island, African Banks and Etoile, the other breeding sites for Roseate Tern known at the time of the first inventory of Important Bird Areas, are also recognised as IBAs.

St Joseph Atoll was included in the proposal for the first inventory of IBAs (Rocamora & Skerrett 1998). However, it was removed from the final inventory because data were considered insufficient. Though more data are still desirable, available evidence now confirms that St Joseph Atoll meets the threshold criteria for consideration as an IBA for three breeding species. These are:

	A4i (waterbirds) Threshold	A4ii (seabirds) Threshold	St Joseph population
Sterna dougallii	400 birds		*c.*350 pairs
Sterna sumatrana	2 birds		*c.*10 pairs
Puffinus pacificus		15,000 pairs	*c.*23,000 pairs*

*Millett & Bristol (2002)

St Joseph Atoll also qualifies under category A4iii (more than 10,000 pairs of seabirds), making it the only site in the outer islands of Seychelles, outside the Aldabra group, to qualify under three categories, A4i, A4ii and A4iii. It may also meet the criteria for some migratory species, including Crab Plover *Dromas ardeola* (threshold 300 birds) and Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres* (350 birds) under category A4ii.

Clearly, St Joseph Atoll merits consideration as a candidate IBA. Another option would be to extend the boundaries of the existing D'Arros IBA to include the whole of St Joseph Atoll, given the proximity of D'Arros, its rat-free status, the joint management of D'Arros with St Joseph Atoll and the fact that waters around both are important feeding grounds for seabirds.

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First host species record for Yellow-throated Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx flavigularis*

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Première mention d'un hôte du Coucou à gorge jaune *Chrysococcyx flavigularis*. Cette note rapporte l'observation d'un jeune Coucou à gorge jaune *Chrysococcyx flavigularis* nourri par un couple de Gobemouches à gorge grise *Myioparus griseigularis* dans le Parc National de l'Ivondo, Gabon, le 13 octobre 2006. Ceci constitue la première mention de reproduction parasite chez cette espèce de coucou, pour laquelle aucun hôte n'était connu.

Yellow-throated Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx flavigularis* is described as very rare in lowland forest in Sierra Leone, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Togo and Nigeria, and rare to frequent in Cameroon, Gabon, Democratic Republic of Congo, south-west Sudan and south-west Uganda. It inhabits primary forest canopy, forest edges, clearings, secondary and gallery forest, and, occasionally, densely wooded savanna (Irwin 1988). It is an extremely unobtrusive and little-known species, presumed to be a brood parasite though its hosts are unknown and eggs undescribed (Irwin 1988, Borrow & Demey 2001, Payne 2005).

On 13 October 2006 we were observing birds in primary forest in Ivindo National Park, at the Ipassa Strict Nature Reserve (also known as Mpassa), west of the town of Makokou, Gabon. This reserve holds almost all of the forest birds known from Gabon, and all but 11 species of the Guinea-Congo Forests biome found in Gabon (Christy 2001). Amongst the species recorded are all four African species of *Chrysococcyx* cuckoo.

At 07.30 hrs, along the main track leading from the research centre into the forest, we found a juvenile cuckoo being fed by two adult Grey-throated Tit-Flycatchers *Myioparus griseigularis*. We observed the activity for more than five minutes; the juvenile cuckoo was stationary at a distance of *c.*10 m from us and 5 m above the track. Based on the whitish undertail and buffish underparts, very finely barred brown and lacking any green coloration, we identified it as a juvenile Yellow-throated Cuckoo (Fig. 1). The flycatchers were initially located by their characteristic song, a series of 3–4 soft, plaintive whistles, and their identification was verified visually: small, all-grey flycatchers that regularly cocked and fanned their relatively long tails which lacked the white of Grey Tit-Flycatcher *M. plumbeus*. During two days at the reserve we saw one and heard another male Yellow-throated Cuckoo.

Our sighting represents the first published host species for Yellow-throated Cuckoo. Like other *Chrysococcyx* in Africa, Yellow-throated Cuckoo appears to parasitise small passerines and, like African Emerald Cuckoo *C. cupreus* and Klaas's Cuckoo *C. klaas*, its host(s) appear to be largely insectivorous. Klaas's Cuckoo is known to parasitise Grey Tit-Flycatcher in Malawi, thus suggesting at least some overlap in hosts with Yellow-throated Cuckoo. Further data are required to confirm that Yellow-throated Cuckoo has multiple hosts and that it shares the same spectrum of hosts as its closest congeners.

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Figure 1. Juvenile Yellow-throated Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx flavigularis*, Ivindo National Park, Gabon, 13 October 2006 (John Caddick & Michael Mills)

Coucou à gorge jaune *Chrysococcyx flavigularis* juvénile, Parc National de l'Ivindo, Gabon, 13 octobre 2006 (John Caddick & Michael Mills)

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A nest of Collared Apalis *Apalis ruwenzori* in Kahuzi-Biega National Park, Democratic Republic of Congo

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Un nid de l'Apalis du Ruwenzori *Apalis ruwenzori* au Parc National de Kahuzi-Biega, République Démocratique du Congo. En juillet 2005, pendant que nous conduisions un inventaire des oiseaux au Parc National de Kahuzi-Biega, nous avons trouvé un nid de l'Apalis du Ruwenzori *Apalis ruwenzori* avec deux oisillons. Nous donnons ici une description du nid et des oisillons, ainsi que des informations sur le comportement et le nombre de visites au nid des adultes.

Collared Apalis *Apalis ruwenzori* is a common understorey species endemic to highland forests of the Albertine Rift (Urban *et al.* 1997). Like many species of these diverse highlands, its breeding biology is poorly known. Only two nests have been described: from Nyungwe Forest, Rwanda (December), by Dowsett-Lemaire (1990), and from Bwindi Impenetrable Forest, Uganda (April), by Butynski (1993). These authors also cite birds in breeding condition in

Figure 1. Nest of Collared Apalis *Apalis ruwenzorii*, with adult peering from the entrance, Kahuzi-Biega National Park, DR Congo, 8 July 2005 (John Bates)

Nid de l'Apalis du Ruwenzori *Apalis ruwenzori*, avec un adulte apparaissant à l'entrée, Parc National de Kahuzi-Biega, RD Congo, 8 juillet 2005 (John Bates)

Table 1. Number of nest visits with food by a pair of Collared Apalis *Apalis ruwenzori* during a five-day period, at Kahuzi-Biega National Park, DR Congo, July 2006.

Tableau 1. Nombre de visites au nid par un couple d'Apalis du Ruwenzori *Apalis ruwenzori* au cours d'une période de cinq jours, Parc National de Kahuzi-Biega, RD Congo, juillet 2006.

	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Total
Start time of observation	09.25*	07.42	07.20	07.35	07.20	
End time of observation	14.58	13.37	13.31	12.57	14.47	
Total observation time (in hours and minutes)	5h33m	6h55m	6h11m	5h22m	7h27m	31h18m
Number of visits of adult bird	35	36	43	43	51	208

*Time of first visit of adult bird; for all other days, start time of observation is time of observer's arrival.

Itombwe Forest, Democratic Republic of Congo (hereafter DR Congo), in March–May (based on Prigogine 1971) and adults feeding fledged young in Rwanda in October and December, with other breeding reports for April, September and December. Chapin (1953) mentions that three males collected in the Rwenzori Mountains were in breeding condition between mid-November and late December

On 8 July 2005, while conducting avian surveys in Kahuzi-Biega National Park, DR Congo, we found a nest of Collared Apalis containing two chicks, on flat terrain at 2,000 m altitude, in Afromontane forest bordering Chashoga swamp (02°13'26"S 28°46'19"E). The forest in this area has an irregular upper canopy, open mid-canopy and dense understorey. An adult was mist-netted near the nest, and an adult was subsequently photographed attending it (Fig. 1), confirming the identity of the occupants. The nest was constructed in a common understorey plant, *Alchornea hirtella* (Euphorbiaceae), the same bushy species in which both other documented nests were placed (Dowsett-Lemaire 1990, Butynski 1993), and was suspended with its base 1.35 m above ground. It comprised an elongated globe of mosses, *c.*13 cm across at its widest, with a circular entrance of 3.5 cm diameter and an inner lining of dried grass. The chicks were unfeathered with closed eyes, and were presumably not more than a few days old.

Using binoculars, we observed feeding activity at the nest by stationing ourselves quietly *c.*5 m away. Both adults were involved in caring for the young. One adult generally remained inside the nest whilst the other brought food. Food was either transferred to the bird in the nest or deposited at the nest entrance. During 31 hours and 18 minutes of observation over a five-day period, BM noted 208 nest visits occurring between 07:00 hrs and early afternoon (Table 1). Visits occurred throughout the day, with peaks in the early morning, mid-morning and late afternoon (Fig. 2).

By the third day of observation, blackish feathers (*c.*1 cm long) had begun to appear on the pale yellow bodies of the chicks, especially on the head, neck, back and wings; the eyes were still closed.

On 10 July, a juvenile (weighing 12 g, similar to the adults) was captured at another site at the same elevation (2,000 m, 02°13'31"S 28°46'16"E) in similar habitat (primary forest with an irregular upper canopy, moderately dense midstorey and dense understorey, bordering a swamp). It was identified as a juvenile based on the buffy breast with no obvious breast-band. Whilst being handled, two adults approached scolding.

Chapin (1953) suspected that many Albertine Rift birds breed throughout the year. Data for Collared Apalis in the southern Albertine Rift

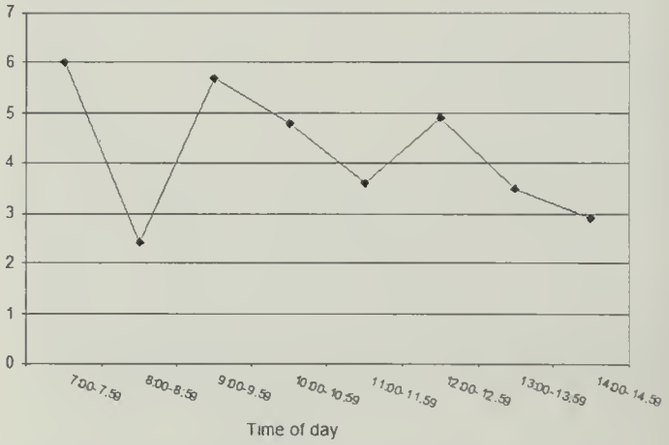

Figure 2. Nest visitation rate (visits/hour) of a pair of Collared Apalis *Apalis ruwenzori* feeding two chicks, Kahuzi-Biega National Park, DR Congo, July 2006.

Fréquence des visites au nid (nombre de visites par heure) d'un couple d'Apalis du Ruwenzori *Apalis ruwenzori* nourissant deux oisillons, Parc National de Kahuzi-Biega, RD Congo, juillet 2006.

region (Rwanda and South Kivu, DR Congo) suggest breeding occurs at least in March, April, July, October and December. Additionally, our record from Kahuzi-Biega National Park confirms the presence of this Afrotropical Highland-biome species in this Important Bird Area, where it was thought likely to occur (Demey & Louette 2001).

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First records of Icterine Warbler *Hippolais icterina* for The Gambia and Senegal

Clive R. Barlow

Premieres mentions de l'Hypolaïs ictérine *Hippolais icterina* pour la Gambie et le Sénégal. Une Hypolaïs ictérine *Hippolais icterina* a été observée à Brufut (13°23'N 16°45'W), en Gambie, le 3 décembre 2005, et une autre vers Fatick (14°30'N 16°30'W), au Sénégal, le 20 fevrier 2006. Ceci constituent les premières mentions documentées pour ces deux pays. Les oiseaux ont pu être distingués de l'Hypolaïs polyglotte *H. polyglotta* et l'Hypolaïs pâle *H. pallida* par leur plumage à dominance jaune-vert, leurs longues ailes, la plage pâle sur l'aile fermée, et leurs pattes grises. Un tableau présente l'ensemble des observations publiées de l'Hypolaïs ictérine dans l'Ouest africain, à l'ouest du Nigéria.

On 26 October 2005, at 08.00 hrs, E. Groenwoud and three other visiting Dutch birders observed a *Hippolais* warbler foraging silently 2 m above ground in open bushy scrub near a vegetable garden project, adjacent to the 'Brufut Woods Regeneration Project', Western Division, The Gambia (13°23'N 16°45'W). The bird had greenish upperparts, a conspicuously long primary projection, 'as long as the secondaries, and not as short as two thirds of the secondaries', and yellowish-white underparts. The legs were greyish and the bill appeared rather heavy. The bird was observed from a distance of 15 m with high-quality optics.

On 20 February 2006, at 07.20 hrs, K. Roy, a Gambian resident, noticed a *Hippolais* with lead-grey legs and a conspicuous pale wing-panel flitting around a mid-height *Acacia* species on the 'Jeunesse en Mission' compound in the village of Niakhar, near Fatick, Senegal (14°30'N 16°30'W). He observed the bird for *c.*10 minutes at eye level from an adjacent rooftop using high-quality optics at a distance down to 3 m. The warbler was rather large and bulky, quite long-billed with an appearance typical of *Hippolais*, and closely resembled Olivaceous Warbler *H. pallida* in structure. It had a narrow yellow supercilium reaching only just behind the eye, greyish-green upperparts with a distinct pale wing-panel, and yellowish-washed underparts, most pronounced on the throat and the undertail-coverts. The lower mandible was yellowish, the upper mandible darker. The length of the primary projection was not noted. No song or foraging calls were given, an issue which KR correctly noted 'to be a striking difference from typical Olivaceous Warbler sightings in Senegambia'.

Discussion

Based on the above-mentioned features, both birds were identified as Icterine Warblers *H. icterina*. The grey legs, the prominent primary projection of the Gambian bird and the pale wing-panel of the Senegalese individual eliminate the nearest possible confusion species, Melodious Warbler *H. polyglotta*, which has brown legs, no wing-panel and a primary projection circa half the length of the tertials (Borrow & Demey 2001). The prominent yellow-green plumage of both birds eliminates the grey-brown Olivaceous Warbler, which lacks yellow tones and has a persistent foraging call (Barlow *et al.* 1997). EG is familiar with Icterine and Melodious Warblers in Europe; as the former is a common species in Holland, he spent little time studying the bird once the identification was made. KR is very familiar with Melodious and Olivaceous Warblers in The Gambia and realised he was watching something unusual. Additionally, KR is familiar with Icterine Warbler in Europe.

These two observations constitute the first records for Icterine Warbler in The Gambia and Senegal. The species is not listed in the field guide for the area (Barlow *et al.* 1997) and a record near Toubacouta in Senegal in February 1982 is considered doubtful (Morel & Morel 1990). Generally considered a transequatorial migrant to south-eastern and south-central Africa, Icterine Warbler is a rare passage migrant through West Africa west of Nigeria (Barlow *et al.* 1997), with published records from Mauritania, Mali, Guinea-

Table 1. Published records of Icterine Warbler *Hippolais icterina* from West Africa, west of Nigeria.
Tableau 1. Mentions publiées de l'Hypolaïs ictérine *Hippolais icterina* de l'Ouest africain, à l'ouest du Nigéria.

Country	*Number of records*	*Months*	*Notes*	*References*
Mauritania	several	Aug, Sep	Sight records; near Nouakchott	Gee (1984)
Senegal	1	Feb	Sight record	this note
The Gambia	1	Oct	Sight record	this note
Guinea-Bissau	1	Feb	Sight record; in clean fresh plumage	Catry & Mendes (1998)
Guinea	1	May	Sangarédi	Demey (2006)
Mali	'good numbers'	Aug/Sep–Apr	Regular near Bamako, where frequently trapped and re-trapped, Dec–Jan	Lamarche (1981)
Liberia	several	Nov, Dec, Feb, Mar, Apr	Sight records and mist-netted	Colston & Curry-Lindahl (1986), Gatter (1997)
Côte d'Ivoire	1	Dec	Mist-netted at Lamto	Thiollay (1985)
Ghana	3	Apr, May	Sight record, 6 Apr; trapped, 1 May; Belgium-ringed bird recovered 30 Apr	Grimes (1987)*
Togo	3	Nov, Jan, Mar	Sight records	Browne (1980), Cheke & Walsh (1996)

* Although Grimes (1987) gives Bannerman (1939) as the reference for his statement that 'A skin collected at Aburri (Shelley & Buckley 1872) was subsequently lost from BMNH', Bannerman (1939) actually writes: 'The old record of the Icterine Warbler having been taken at Aburi, Gold Coast, is on the authority of Shelley and Buckley, but there is no such specimen in their collections in the British Museum, and some confusion with the Melodious Warbler is possible.' Grimes's (1987) re-wording is thus incorrect and the record should be rejected.

Bissau, Guinea, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana and Togo (Borrow & Demey 2001, Demey 2006; see Table 1).

With an ever-increasing number of competent observers active in the region, closer scrutiny in the field of yellow-green *Hippolais* warblers, using the key identification criteria of wing-panel presence, primary projection length and leg colour, may result in increased reports of Icterine Warbler. However, recent ringing schemes in Senegal and The Gambia have not found the species.

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First record of Yellow-browed Warbler *Phylloscopus inornatus* for The Gambia

Clive R. Barlow

Première mention du Pouillot à grands sourcils *Phylloscopus inornatus* pour la Gambie. Un Pouillot à grands sourcils *P. inornatus* a été observé et photographié à Kotu (13°28'N 16°43'W) en Gambie, le 3 décembre 2005. Ceci constitue la première mention documentée pour le pays et la deuxième pour l'Afrique sub-Saharienne, la première étant celle d'un individu au nord du Sénégal, le 6 décembre 2003.

On 3 December 2005, between 09.00 and 09.30 hrs, T. Armstrong, N. Marshall, J. Rayner, D. Smith and F. Wake watched a small, boldly marked *Phylloscopus* with two gleaming wingbars busily foraging in a partially leafed and flowering Winter-thorn *Acacia albida* along the Kotu Cycle Track, Kombo St Mary Division, in coastal Gambia (13°28'N 16°43'W). The bird appeared to be picking insects from the blossoms. The only other species present for the duration of the observation was a single Olivaceous Warbler *Hippolais pallida*. The two birds were watched with high-quality optics from a distance of *c.*6 m and the *Phylloscopus* was recorded on video. The habitat consists of heavily degraded coastal scrub with scattered deciduous trees and Oil-palms *Elaeis guiniensis* next to an *Avicennia* mangrove-fringed coastal creek. In November–April, birding visitors based at nearby hotels constantly watch the site.

Description

Head dominated by long, bright, creamy-white supercilium, which extended well beyond ear-coverts, kinked as it tapered slightly onto nape, and bordered below by narrow dark eyestripe. Ear-coverts olivaceous with some indistinct flecking. Crown olive-green without central stripe. Nape and mantle plain olive-green. In the bright light conditions, rear views revealed a warm green cast to mantle and body. Wings darker overall, with two very strong, broad, creamy-white bars on greater and median coverts, tapering slightly towards leading edge of wing. Both wingbars appeared much stronger than normally seen on autumn individuals of Yellow-browed Warbler *P. inornatus* in the UK; this may have been due to the brighter light conditions in The Gambia (T. Armstrong pers. comm.). Flight-feathers dark olive; primaries and secondaries with very narrow pale fringes, tertials with broad pale fringes, though not as bold as on coverts. Underparts dull whitish. Legs and feet orange-brown. Bill dark with a hint of a pale base to lower mandible. Call heard twice, a loud, sharp *tweep* or *tweest* without inflection.

Discussion

Based on the above-mentioned features, the bird was identified as a Yellow-browed Warbler. The generally brighter plumage, leg colour and call eliminated the nearest possible confusion species,

Hume's Leaf Warbler *P. humei,* which has never been recorded in Africa (Urban *et al.* 1997, Snow & Perrins 1998). The observers are also familiar with Greenish Warbler *P. trochiloides,* Arctic Warbler *P. borealis* and Pallas's Warbler *P. proregulus.* This observation, with photographic substantiation (the videograbs permit positive identification but are of insufficient quality to reproduce here), constitutes the first record of Yellow-browed Warbler in The Gambia.

Yellow-browed Warbler breeds at high and middle latitudes of the Palearctic in Siberia, with the main wintering grounds in south-east Asia (Cramp 1992). In recent decades it has occurred increasingly in Europe, with exceptional numbers in autumn 2003 (van den Berg 2003, 2004). In October 2005, 1,250 were recorded in Britain (Golley 2005). It is a rare vagrant to North Africa and the first documented observation in sub-Saharan Africa was made on 6 December 2003 in northern Senegal (Cruse 2004).

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Tony Armstrong, Neil Marshall, John Rayner, Doug Smith and Fred Wake observed the bird and submitted a full description. I thank them for the courtesy of this and for responding to further queries. Modou Colley accompanied the group. Tony & Carol Spencer kindly supplied video footage.

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First record of Ortolan Bunting *Emberiza hortulana* for Ghana

Steve M. Lister

Première mention du Bruant ortolan *Emberiza hortulana* pour le Ghana. Un mâle adulte du Bruant ortolan *Emberiza hortulana* a été observé et enregistré sur magnétoscope au Parc National de Mole, Ghana, le 23 mars 2006. Ceci constitue la première donnée documentée pour le pays.

On 23 March 2006, an adult male Ortolan Bunting *Emberiza hortulana* was observed in Mole National Park, Ghana, by seven members of a Rockjumper Birding Tours group. The bird was perched atop a small thorn tree below the small escarpment immediately in front of the lodge, at *c.*80–90 m from the observers, permitting excellent unobstructed views through telescopes. It remained there for *c.*5 minutes, from 17.05 to 17.10 hrs, and was video-taped. It was not seen again during our two-day stay at Mole.

Description

Typical bunting shape, similar in size to a Cinnamon-breasted Rock Bunting *E. tahapisi* seen a few minutes earlier and clearly larger than Pin-tailed Whydahs *Vidua macroura* perched nearby. The head was grey with a slight blue tone, except for a pale yellow moustachial stripe and throat. The bill was pale pink and there was an obvious pale yellow eye-ring. The blue-grey colour of the head extended to the breast as a broad curving band, clearly demarcated from the dull chestnut-orange of the rest of the underparts. The chestnut

upperparts and wings were streaked black. There were two pale wingbars formed by the tips of the coverts, that on the greater coverts being more obvious. No calls were heard.

Ortolan Bunting has not been recorded in Ghana previously, nor has it been observed in neighbouring countries (Grimes 1987, Borrow & Demey 2004, Fry & Keith 2004). In West Africa the species is a rare to uncommon and local Palearctic visitor, which winters mainly in upland Guinea and northern Sierra Leone and, less commonly, in north-central Nigeria (Borrow & Demey 2004, Fry & Keith 2004).

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First records of Lemon Dove *Aplopelia larvata* for Angola

Michael S. L. Mills[a] and Anthony D. Dowd[b]

Premières mentions du Pigeon à masque blanc *Aplopelia larvata* pour l'Angola. Le chant d'un Pigeon à masque blanc *Aplopelia larvata* a été entendu et enregistré dans la forêt de Kumbira, Cuanza Sul, le 23 septembre 2005, mais l'oiseau n'a pas été vu. Le 2 août 2005, deux individus ont pu être observés de près, confirmant l'identité de l'espèce. Quoique sa présence dans le pays était suspectée, elle n'avait jamais été confirmée; ceci constituent donc les premières données documentées pour l'Angola.

On 23 September 2005, MSLM was conducting bird surveys in Kumbira Forest, Cuanza Sul (*c.*11°09'S 14°17'E; see Ryan *et al.* 2004 for a site description). In an area of densely regrown coffee forest, he heard the typical, low-pitched *hoo* call, repeated for long periods, of a Lemon Dove *Aplopelia larvata* (Urban *et al.* 1986). The call was tape-recorded (copy available at www.birdangola.com/downloads.htm, and will be archived at the British Library National Sound Archive, London, UK), but the bird was not seen. On 2 August 2006, we flushed two largish, dark doves, intermediate in size between Tambourine Dove *Turtur tympanistria* and Red-eyed Dove *Streptopelia semitorquata*, from the forest floor of a fairly undisturbed part of Kumbira Forest. Both perched nearby, where ADD obtained clear views of one of the birds' brown back, pale face and brownish chest and belly, which confirmed it was a Lemon Dove.

These are the first confirmed records of Lemon Dove for Angola. No mention of the species is made in previous major ornithological country overviews (Traylor 1963, Pinto 1983), though a call thought to be of this species was heard at N'Dalatando (formerly Salazar), Cuanza Norte, in 1973, by C. J. Vernon (Urban *et al.* 1986, Dean 2000). Lemon Dove is probably a fairly widespread resident of scarp forests in central Angola and in Guinea-Congo forests of northern Angola, though the lack of records suggests it is rather scarce. Due to the species' very secretive nature it has almost certainly been under-recorded both here and in neighbouring areas. There are records from the southern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and north-west Zambia near to, or on, the border with Angola, and a single record is available from the lower Congo River in western DRC (Benson *et al.* 1971, Urban *et al.* 1986, Dean 2000, Leonard 2005). These records led Dean (2000) to speculate that the species might also occur in eastern Angola, in south-eastern Lunda Sul and eastern Moxico.

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First record of Bob-tailed Weaver *Brachycope anomala* for Angola

Ian Sinclair

Première mention du Travailleur à queue courte *Brachycope anomala* pour l'Angola. Deux Travailleurs à queue courte *Brachycope anomala* mâles ont été observés le 31 janvier 2005, à 2 km à l'ouest de la ville de Luinga, sur la Luinga, Province de Malanje, Angola du nord (08°28'S 15°36'E). Ceci constitue la première donnée documentée pour le pays et représente une extension vers le sud de l'aire de distribution connue de cette espèce.

The Bob-tailed Weaver *Brachycope anomala* is virtually confined to the Congo River and its larger tributaries, with a vagrant record from south-east Cameroon (Fry & Keith 2004, Borrow & Demey 2001). It is a little-known and -studied weaver with few recent sight records, the most recent being of *c.*20+, on 4 September 2006, at Ouesso airport, northern Congo (R. Cassidy pers. comm.).

On 31 January 2005, at 06.45 hrs, two male Bob-tailed Weavers were observed 2 km west of Luinga town, on the Luinga River, Malanje Province, northern Angola (08°28'S 15°36'E). The habitat was a mixture of shorter *Juncus* spp. and taller *Phragmites* spp. reedbeds mixed with rank grass and stubby shrubs, adjoining the Luinga River and its gallery forest, and the area apparently forms a flooded backwater of the river following heavy rains. The weavers were seen flying over and amidst the grasses and reeds. At one stage, they were chased by a female Yellow-mantled Widowbird *Euplectes macroura* and a Chirping Cisticola *Cisticola pipiens*. Both Bob-tailed Weavers were in full nuptial plumage. They were identified by their small size and very short tail, combined with a yellow head, small black mask and robust, dark bill. They were more reminiscent of a small *Euplectes* bishop than a *Ploceus* weaver. Their flight was very rapid and similar to that of bishops. The birds were not seen to display. Though searched for, no females were seen.

This is the first record of Bob-tailed Weaver for Angola—it does not feature in the country's most recent checklist (Dean 2000)—and constitutes a southerly extension of *c.*350 km of this species' known range.

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Little-known African bird: The enigmatic Bates's Weaver *Ploceus batesi*

Ron Demey

Un oiseau africain peu connu: l'énigmatique Tisserin de Bates *Ploceus batesi*. Le Tisserin de Bates *Ploceus batesi* n'est connu que de quelques localités dans la forêt humide dense du Sud Cameroun. L'espèce a été décrite en 1908 et nommée d'après George Latimer Bates (1863–1940), qui collecta le spécimen type, une femelle, près du Dja, en janvier 1906. En 1908 un deuxième spécimen, un mâle adulte, fut collecté près de Kumangola et l'année suivante quatre oiseaux furent pris à Bitye. Bates n'a jamais observé ces oiseaux dans la nature lui-même: ils furent tous trouvés et tués avec des flèches par de jeunes villageois. Quelques autres spécimens furent collectés par la suite, étendant l'aire de distribution connue vers l'ouest et l'est. En 1978, l'espèce a été vue deux fois dans la forêt classée de Douala-Edéa, près de la côte, et l'année suivante un oiseau était observé près de Limbe, au pied du Mont Cameroun. Récemment, l'espèce a été vue au Mont Kupe (deux fois en 1990) et près de la Réserve du Dja (deux observations). Pratiquement rien n'est connu de sa biologie. Le tisserin a été observé seul, en couple et dans un groupe mixte d'oiseaux insectivores. Il se nourrit d'insectes et semble chercher sa nourriture en prospectant l'écorce des troncs et des grosses branches, à la façon du Tisserin de Preuss *P. preussi*, avec qui il pourrait être en compétition. La raison pour laquelle le Tisserin de Bates, considéré comme Menacé d'extinction, est si rare, demeure un mystère.

Bates's Weaver, known only from a few localities in southern Cameroon's lowland rainforest, was described in 1908 by Richard Bowdler Sharpe as *Othyphantes batesi* (Sharpe 1908). The new species was named after George Latimer Bates (1863–1940), who collected the type specimen, a female 'not quite in full plumage' near the Dja River on 29 January 1906. Although the precise locality was not mentioned and the Dja River traverses quite a large area, the bird was presumably taken in the vicinity of Bitye, near the south-western border of the present-day Dja Biosphere Reserve, where Bates had settled not long before and from where he made numerous short collecting trips. 'Bitye' was apparently the way local people pronounced 'Bates' (Kinnear 1940). In 1908 a second specimen, an adult male, was collected at nearby Kumangola (Ogilvie-Grant 1910, Sharpe 1910), and in the following year four more birds were taken at Bitye and sent to the British Museum (Bannerman 1949). Bates never observed these birds alive: they were all taken by local boys with bows and arrows (Bates 1930). Additional specimens were subsequently collected at Lolodorf and Sangmélima, extending the species' known range westward (Bannerman 1949, Good 1953), and on the Dja River at Moloundou, on the border with Congo-Brazzaville, to the east (Louette 1981). In 1978, the species was observed twice at Tissongo in the Douala-Edéa Forest Reserve, near the coast (Collar & Stuart 1985) and the following year one was seen near Limbe (Victoria), at the foot of Mt Cameroon (Taylor 1981), further extending the range to the west. In recent years, it has only been seen on Mt Kupe (twice in 1990) and near the Dja reserve (at Somalomo in 1995 and at Shwani, 12 km from Somalomo, in 1996) (BirdLife International 2000, 2006).

Almost nothing is known of the species' biology. It has been observed singly and in pairs, and Bates (1930) reports that at least one of his specimens was in a mixed-species flock of insectivores. Although its habitat is lowland rainforest (to 900 m on Mt Kupe), all recent records are from secondary forest and forest edge, including degraded forest near villages (BirdLife International 2006). Bates's Weaver takes insects and appears to forage in the manner of the bark-gleaning Preuss's Weaver *P. preussi*, with which it may compete (Bates 1930, Bannerman 1949, BirdLife International 2006). Why it should be so rare remains a mystery. Its rarity is perhaps due to the loss of some specific habitat feature (BirdLife

Adult male Bates's Weaver / Tisserin de Bates, mâle adulte *Ploceus batesi* (Pete Leonard)

International 2006), but the species was apparently already rare at the time of its discovery (Bates 1930). It is currently listed as Endangered.

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Photospot:
The endemic kestrels of the Cape Verde Islands

Edwin Winkel

Les crécerelles endémiques des îles du Cap-Vert. Deux formes endémiques de crécerelles occupent les îles du Cap-Vert: *alexandri*, dans les îles de l'est et du sud, et *neglectus*, dans les îles du nord-ouest. Les deux taxons sont traditionellement traités comme des sous-espèces du Faucon crécerelle *Falco tinnunculus*, mais leur traitement comme espèces à part entière pourrait peut-être se justifier, surtout dans le cas de *neglectus*, sur la base de leur morphologie distinctive et leur long isolement par rapport aux races continentales. *Alexandri* est plus grand que *neglectus* et possède un plumage plus coloré. Son dimorphisme sexuel est net, tandis qu'il est faible ou même absent chez *neglectus*. Les deux crécerelles sont des résidents communs et se nourissent de petites proies, telles que gros insectes, lézards, souris et même oiseaux. Leur divergence pourrait avoir été causée par leur isolement géographique pendant la dernière glaciation, quand l'archipel a été divisé en deux groupes d'îles qui correspondent à la distribution actuelle des deux taxons. Elle pourrait toutefois également être le résultat de colonisations successives, *neglectus* ayant fait partie d'une première vague et ayant été remplacé par la suite dans les îles de l'est et du sud par *alexandri*, arrivé dans une deuxième vague qui n'a pas atteint les îles du nord-ouest.

The Cape Verdes boast two endemic kestrel taxa, *alexandri* ('Alexander's Kestrel') and *neglectus* ('Neglected Kestrel'). Traditionally, they have been treated as subspecies of Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus* (Cramp & Simmons 1980, Orta 1994, Dickinson 2003), a course also followed by recent identification guides (Borrow & Demey 2001, 2004). Unsurprisingly, advocates of phylogenetic species concepts accord them species rank (e.g. Hazevoet 1995). However, even under the Biological Species Concept, specific treatment may be justified, particularly for *neglectus*, on the grounds of their distinctive morphology and long isolation from mainland races (Ferguson-Lees & Christie 2001). Alexander's Kestrel is restricted to the eastern and southern islands of Sal, Boavista, Maio, Santiago, Fogo, Brava and Ilhéus do Rombo, whilst Neglected Kestrel occurs on the north-western islands of Santo Antão, São Vicente, Santa Luzia, Branco, Raso and São Nicolau. Both are common residents that can be seen almost anywhere, from coasts to the highest peaks, but densities appear higher near human settlements and in agricultural areas. For example, during a visit to the Cape Verdes in November 2006, I found Alexander's Kestrel to be common in the capital Praia, on Santiago. On this island, it was also numerous in the Serra do Pico da Antónia, a mountain range with valleys and slopes dominated by plantations. Neglected Kestrel, on the other hand, was easy to see in the Faja Valley, an extensive agricultural area in the north-west of São Nicolau.

Although the easternmost island of the north-western group, São Nicolau, lies just *c.*110 km from Sal, the nearest island in the eastern and southern group, the difference in appearance between the two falcons is remarkable. Alexander's Kestrel is, first of all, noticeably larger; its size and jizz being comparable to that of the nominate race of Common Kestrel, whereas the smaller Neglected Kestrel, which also appears to have a shorter tail and smaller wings, looks rather like a bulky Merlin *F. columbarius*.

Both have banded tails and are heavily marked and spotted, but Alexander's Kestrel has brighter plumage than its north-western counterpart. Its upperparts are reddish in the male and golden-brown in the female, and its breast is pale, whereas the upperparts of *neglectus* are brownish and its breast is more dirty looking, which, combined with the strong markings, gives the bird a dark and cold impression (Figs. 5–6). Sexual plumage dimorphism in *neglectus* is weak or absent. The male can have some grey on the head or tail, but these parts are mostly brown, as in a typical female.

Apart from the different-coloured upperparts, *alexandri* exhibits other differences between the sexes. The male has a greyish forehead, grey ear-coverts and a grey tail, whereas the female has a


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brown head, with only some grey on the ear-coverts, and a brown tail. Hazevoet (1995) and Clarke (2006) state that males also have grey in the crown, but this is apparently not always the case, as demonstrated in Fig. 2. The male's underwings are paler and less barred and spotted than the female's (Fig. 3). As in nominate *tinnunculus*, the male is also slightly smaller than the female. *Neglectus* shows no significant differences in size between the sexes.

Both taxa feed on small prey such as large insects, skinks, mice and even birds, as I found when examining the contents of pellets on Raso. The African Migratory Locust *Locusta migratoria migratorioides*, which was abundant in autumn 2006, appears to be a main prey item, when available. I gained the impression that the hunting strategies of these kestrels differed slightly, with Alexander's Kestrel being the more active. On Santiago I observed it mostly in the air, both soaring and circling high, or hovering and flying fast lower above ground. Only occasionally did I observe this taxon on the ground, resting or feeding, or perched on lamp posts or buildings. The Neglected Kestrels on São Nicolau, in contrast, were nearly always observed perched on poles or electricity lines. I rarely saw them in flight and only once did I observe a bird hovering. Was this just coincidence or is Neglected Kestrel more of a sit-and-wait kind of hunter? Both kestrels consume their prey on a perch, but large insects are also consumed on the wing (Fig. 4).

How the two taxa diverged is still debated. Hazevoet (1995) mentions several different plausible factors. Geographical isolation, due to the last glaciation, may have been a cause, as the archipelago was then divided into two island groups that concur with the present ranges of *alexandri* and *neglectus*. However, divergence may also be the result of separate colonisations, with *neglectus* belonging to the first wave, to be replaced on the eastern and southern islands by *alexandri* in a second wave which did not reach the north-western islands.

Captions to plates on opposite page

Figure 1. Female Alexander's Kestrel *Falco* (*tinnunculus*) *alexandri* / femelle, Praia, Santiago, Cape Verde Islands, 14 October 2006 (Edwin Winkel)

Figure 2. Alexander's Kestrel *Falco* (*tinnunculus*) *alexandri*, Tarrafal, Santiago, Cape Verde Islands, 17 October 2006 (Edwin Winkel). Typical male, but without grey on the crown / Mâle typique, mais sans gris sur la calotte.

Figure 3. Alexander's Kestrel *Falco* (*tinnunculus*) *alexandri*, Praia, Santiago, Cape Verde Islands, 14 October 2006 (Edwin Winkel). Hovering male / Mâle en vol sur place.

Figure 4. Alexander's Kestrel *Falco* (*tinnunculus*) *alexandri*, Praia, Santiago, Cape Verde Islands, 14 October 2006 (Edwin Winkel). Male, eating an insect on the wing like Red-footed Falcon *F. verspertinus* / Mâle, mangeant un insecte en vol comme un Faucon kobez *F. vespertinus*.

Figure 5. Neglected Kestrel *Falco* (*tinnunculus*) *neglectus*, Cachaço, Sao Nicolau, Cape Verde Islands, 25 October 2006 (Edwin Winkel). The uniform ground colour and the heavy marks give it a dark and cold appearance / La couleur de base uniforme et les marques prononcés contribuent à l'apparence foncée et 'froide' de ce taxon.

Figure 6. Neglected Kestrel *Falco* (*tinnunculus*) *neglectus*, Cachaço, Sao Nicolau, Cape Verde Islands, 25 October 2006 (Edwin Winkel)

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Birding Dja Biosphere Reserve, southern Cameroon

Eddie Williams

Observer les oiseaux dans la Réserve de la Biosphère du Dja, au Cameroun du sud. La Réserve de la Biosphère du Dja, une Zone d'Importance pour la Conservation des Oiseaux et un World Heritage Site, n'est généralement pas inclue dans le circuit des ornithologues étrangers visitant le pays. Cette réserve, qui s'étend sur 5.260 km^2 et est ainsi cinq fois plus grande que le Parc National de Korup, contient pourtant une avifaune riche en espèces intéressantes, telles que le Picatharte du Cameroun *Picathartes oreas* et l'énigmatique Tisserin de Bates *Ploceus batesi*. L'article fournit des informations sur l'accès, les sites clés et les espèces d'oiseaux et de mammifères.

Cameroon is an essential destination for those with an interest in African birds. A well-worn birding route has consequently emerged, encompassing the Sahel in the north, the central savannas, the montane forest of the Bamenda highlands, Mt Kupe, Mt Cameroon and the lowland forests of Korup in the south-west (see, e.g., Mills & Cohen 2003, 2004). One major habitat zone generally absent from most birders' itineraries is the vast lowland rainforests of the south and south-east. Though much of the region is being logged and degraded, a network of reserves and national parks has been established to protect huge areas of forest. One such is Dja Biosphere Reserve, an Important Bird Area (IBA) and World Heritage Site, which at 5,260 km^2 is five times larger than Korup National Park and is thus the largest protected area in Cameroon (Fotso *et al.* 2001). Situated south-east of the capital Yaoundé and just south of the village of Somalomo, the reserve can be accessed from the latter. It is very rich in mammals and birds typical of the Congolese-type lowland evergreen and semi-evergreen rainforest. For birders, it is especially interesting in that the world's largest known **Grey-necked Picathartes** *Picathartes oreas* colony occurs, making sightings of this enigmatic species virtually guaranteed. In addition, there is the possibility of finding the elusive and almost unknown in life **Bates's Weaver** *Ploceus batesi*. Other sought-after species previous-

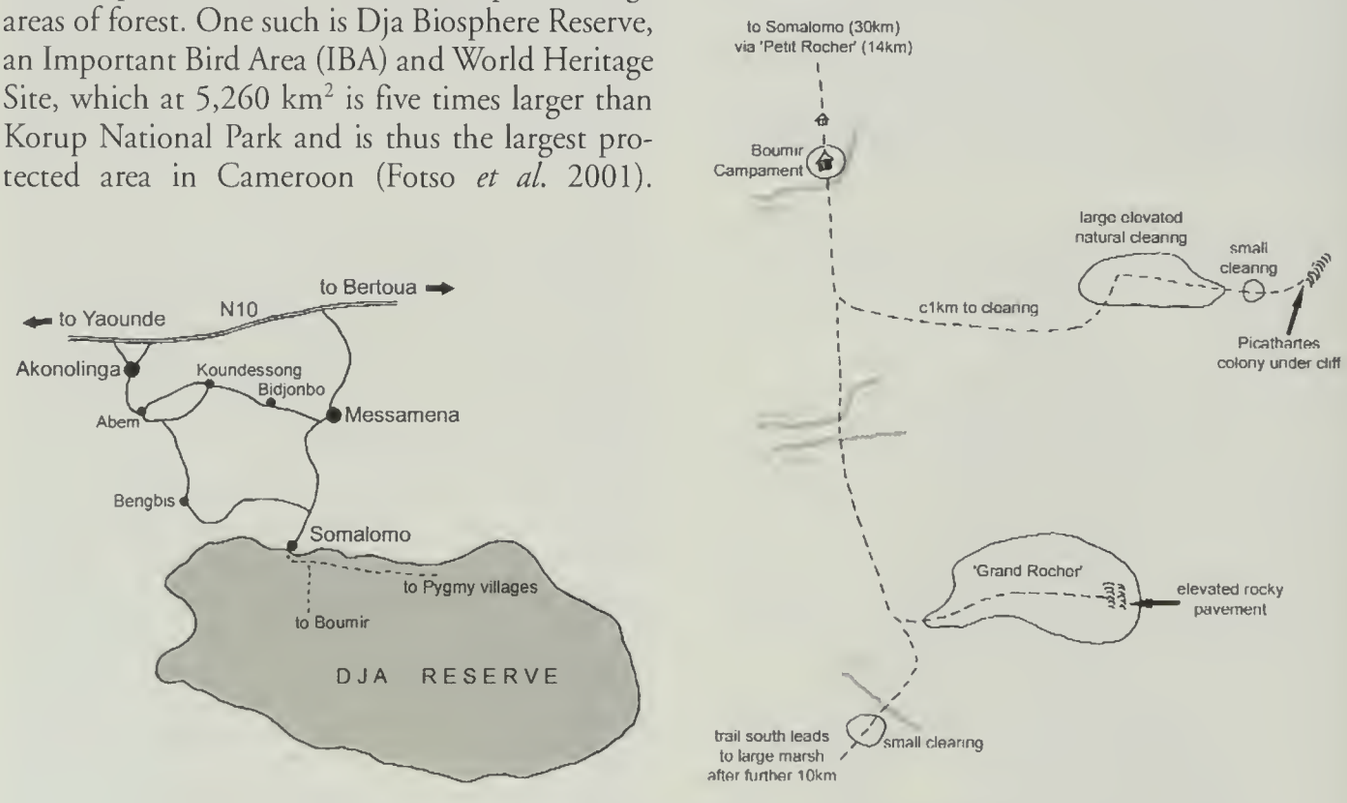

Figure 1. Location of Dja Biosphere Reserve (left) and sites within the reserve mentioned in the text (right).

Localisation de la Réserve de la Biosphère du Dja (à gauche) et des sites à l'intérieur de la réserve mentionnés dans le texte (à droite).

ly recorded include **Congo Serpent Eagle** *Dryotriorchis spectabilis*, **Plumed Guineafowl** *Guttera plumifera*, **Grey-throated Rail** *Canirallus oculeus*, **Akun Eagle Owl** *Bubo leucostictus*, **Tessmann's Flycatcher** *Muscicapa tessmanni* and **Yellow-capped Weaver** *Ploceus dorsomaculatus* (Fotso *et al.* 2001), and there is even an outside chance of **Shelley's Eagle Owl** *Bubo shelleyi*.

I found the protection and management of the park, currently undertaken by the European Union-funded ECOFAC project, however, to be woefully inefficient. Poaching was rampant and I saw animals being conveyed across the River Dja at Somalomo in front of park staff, who had not been paid for six months. Visitors are extremely rare and the primary aim of this article is to encourage birders to visit and thus promote the effective conservation of the reserve's wildlife. For the time being, at least, it is possible to observe impressive numbers of rainforest mammals, but the long-term outlook appears bleak unless serious efforts are made to reduce poaching and improve park management.

I visited Dja in March 2006 during a birding trip to Cameroon. I had no prior information on how to visit, apart from that provided in budget travel guides, which was for the most part inaccurate. Although the reserve is remote, a major expedition is not necessary and it can be visited by lone birders such as myself with a little preparation and planning, and surprisingly cheaply. It did take me some time to obtain the permit and make the necessary travel arrangements in Yaoundé, however, and I firstly cover these details.

Permits

Access is not possible without a permit issued by the ECOFAC conservateur in Yaoundé, currently Mr Nlegue Etienne Hyacinthe (e-mail henlegue@yahoo.fr). Note that the ECOFAC camnet e-mail address is no longer used. The postal address is B.P. 13844, Yaoundé, and the telephone number 221–4273. I was unable to obtain these details prior to my visit and made my arrangements after a long search for the ECOFAC office in Yaoundé. The office is best located from the Hotel Sipowa, situated *c.*500 m north-west of Carrefour Bastos along the main road which runs from this crossroads to (after 3.5 km) Mt Fébé. From the Hotel Sipowa, walk back towards central Yaoundé on the right-hand side of the road. After less than 1 km you will see a long, low wall with 'African Security-Cameroon' painted on it in large letters. The ECOFAC office is just beyond this in what looks like a small apartment block on the right, with a security hut in the driveway. The guard will direct you to the office. The permit costs CFA 5,000 per person per day or part day (UK£1 = CFA 974, in August 2006). You will also be given a letter to present to the Police Chief at Somalomo, who will register your details. ECOFAC staff at Somalomo will also need to see the permit. There is no requirement to take an 'eco-guard' with you, as they may suggest.

Whilst killing time in Yaoundé, the slopes of nearby Mt Fébé are well worth a visit. A total of 163 bird species has been recorded around the exercise circuit on the lower slopes alone (Quantrill & Quantrill 1998). I saw **Brown-backed Scrub Robin** *Cercotrichas hartlaubi* and **Yellow-necked Greenbul** *Chlorocichla falkensteini* is common.

Travel

The best route is probably Yaoundé–Akonolinga–Messaména–Somalomo. The latter is situated on the north bank of the River Dja at the reserve boundary. If using your own or a hired vehicle ensure it has four-wheel drive, as the road between Messaména and Somalomo can be difficult, especially after rain. Buses leave Yaoundé for Somalomo every Wednesday and Saturday at 08.00 hrs from the 'Fanta Citroen' taxi park in the Mvog Ada quarter; taxi drivers all know it. It is not really a taxi park, more of a parking place adjacent to a bar. Buy a ticket (CFA 4,000) the day before, if possible. The journey takes all day, with the bus usually arriving in Somalomo in the evening, allowing sufficient time to arrange a guide and supplies. Breakdowns can occur, however, and I didn't arrive until 04.30 hrs the following morning. Buses return to Yaoundé on Thursdays and Sundays at 07.00 hrs.

Other logistics

The guide I used was Jackson Abete Djengo, Président des Guides, ECOFAC, Somalomo, known locally as Djengo. He is extremely knowledgeable about the mammals and is used by the park surveys. He speaks a little English, unlike most locals. I would recommend you find him immediately on arrival at Somalomo, although he

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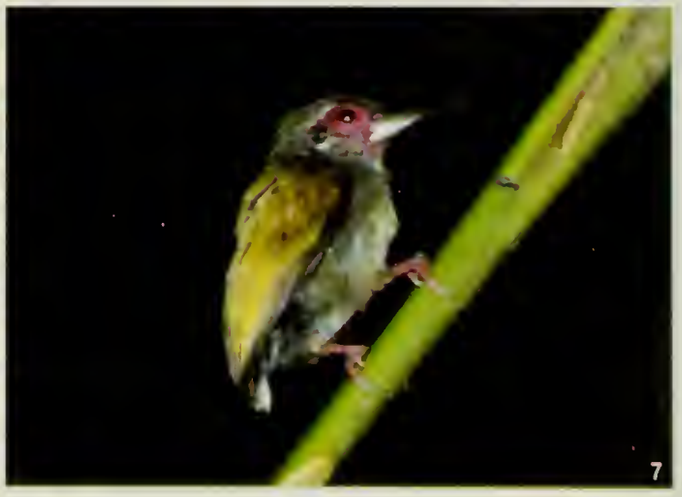

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may well find you. A guide is essential in Dja as some mammal trails can resemble human trails to the layman and there is potential to get hopelessly lost. Jackson will help with supplies and secure porters if you intend to base yourself at Boumir, 30 km inside the park. Guides cost CFA 3,500 and porters CFA 3,000 per day. It is only worth hiring porters for the walk to and from Boumir. All food can be bought at Somalomo. You will need a tent at Boumir and a good water filter is also useful, unless you wish to carry all water with you, or boil it.

There is a basic hostel at Somalomo known as 'Antoinette's' which has several rooms at CFA 4,000 per night. The hostess will provide food if required (breakfast CFA 3,000; lunch and supper CFA 6,000), but there are several basic cafés in the village which provide much cheaper food for those on a shoestring. Much of the food supplied, however, is bush meat and I would strongly advise against financing this trade by buying it.

The 30-km walk to Boumir can be made in a day. However, those wishing to break the journey part way can camp at a small stream near an inselberg known as 'Petit Rocher'.

Birds and birding sites

The park's avifauna is typical of the Congolese-type lowland rainforest and thus includes a number of species not usually encountered by birders visiting Cameroon. I found several areas of the tiny portion of the park I explored to be especially productive.

Captions to photos on opposite page

Figure 2. Grey-necked Picathartes / Picatharte du Cameroun *Picathartes oreas* (Doug Peters/Earthwatch)

Figure 3. Congo Serpent Eagle / Serpentaire du Congo *Dryotriorchis spectabilis* (Callan Cohen)

Figure 4. Forest Elephant / Élephant de forêt *Loxodonta africana cyclotis* (Leonard Usongo)

Figure 5. Chocolate-backed Kingfisher / Martin-chasseur marron *Halycon badia* (Pete Morris/Birdquest)

Figure 6. Hartlaub's Duck / Canard de Hartlaub *Pteronetta hartlaubii* (Pete Morris/Birdquest)

Figure 7. African Piculet / Picumne de Verreaux *Sasia africana* (Bernard Van Elegem)

Somalomo area

The River Dja at Somalomo is bordered by riverine forest which held **Gosling's Apalis** *Apalis goslingi*, **White-browed Forest Flycatcher** *Fraseria cinerascens* and **Cassin's Flycatcher** *Muscicapa cassini*. **White-throated Blue Swallow** *Hirundo nigrita* was common and extremely confiding around the crossing point. It would be worth hiring a dugout to explore the river further. **Spot-breasted Ibis** *Bostrychia rara* and **Vermiculated Fishing Owl** *Scotopelia bouvieri*, both of which occur in the park, are possibilities.

Once across the river and in the park a broad track runs alongside its northern boundary, connecting a number of hunter and pygmy villages. This passes through areas of farmbush, secondary and primary forest, and is good for forest edge and farmbush species. I only spent a lunchtime and an early evening in this area en route and wish I'd had more time. **Afep** *Columba unicincta* and **Western Bronze-naped Pigeons** *C. iriditorques*, **Black-collared Lovebird** *Agapornis swindernianus*, **Black Bee-eater** *Merops gularis*, **Spotted Honeyguide** *Indicator maculatus* and good numbers of **Splendid** *Lamprotornis splendidus*, **Purple-headed** *L. purpureiceps* and **Narrow-tailed Starlings** *Poeoptera lugubris* frequented the treetops, along with a singing **Zenker's Honeyguide** *Melignomon zenkeri*. **Sooty Boubou** *Laniarius leucorhynchus* and **Yellow-throated Nicator** *Nicator vireo* skulked in the undergrowth alongside the track and I had tantalising flight views of a small all-dark nightjar at dusk. After *c.*6 km an inconspicuous track leads off to the right and reaches Petit Rocher after a further 10 km.

Petit Rocher

The track to Petit Rocher and Boumir passes through dense primary forest. It can be difficult to follow and is in parts heavily overgrown, requiring some machete work by the guide. This obviously reduces the amount of birding time en route. I observed **Latham's Forest Francolin** *Francolinus lathami* and **Blue-headed Wood Dove** *Turtur brehmeri* on the trail, together with a poorly seen covey of guineafowl which were probably **Plumed.** As I set out late from Somalomo, I had to camp at Petit Rocher. This is the first of the rock- and grass-covered inselbergs which become more frequent and extensive toward the centre of the park. I observed an extremely confiding **White-spotted**

Flufftail *Sarothrura pulchra* here and an **African Wood Owl** *Strix woodfordii* put in an appearance after dark. From Petit Rocher it is a further 14 km or so to Boumir. I frequently encountered mixed-species flocks along this and other trails in the park. **Greenbuls** were always a feature and included **Red-tailed** *Criniger calurus*, **White-bearded** *C. ndussumensis* and **Eastern Bearded** *C. chloronotus*, **Icterine** *Phyllastrephus icterinus* and **Xavier's** *P. xavieri*, and **Little Grey** *Andropadus gracilis*, **Ansorge's** *A. ansorgei* and **Cameroon Sombre** *A. curvirostris*, providing endless identification challenges. Ant swarms were also regular and often attended by **Red-tailed** *Neocossyphus rufus* and **White-tailed Ant Thrushes** *N. poensis*, **Brown-chested** *Alethe poliocephala* and **Fire-crested Alethes** *A. diademata*, and **Red-tailed** *Bleda syndactylus* and **Lesser Bristlebills** *B. notatus*. **Lowland Akalat** *Sheppardia cyornithopsis* also occurs, though I only heard it.

Boumir

Boumir was used *c.*10 years ago during the initial scientific surveys of the area but is now nothing more than a dilapidated wooden shelter. It is situated in a small clearing beside a stream, providing a convenient water source. Early mornings in this area were often very productive. **Gabon Coucal** *Centropus anselli* was especially regular here, though they could be extremely hard to see. **Great Blue Turaco** *Corythaeola cristata*, **Yellow-billed Turaco** *Tauraco macrorhynchus* and **Olive Long-tailed Cuckoo** *Cercococcyx olivinus* were common visitors to the treetops, and a **Long-tailed Hawk** *Urotriorchis macrourus* once surveyed the clearing for ten minutes. **Blue-billed** *Malimbus nitens* and **Cassin's Malimbes** *M. cassini* were often present in *Raphia* palms bordering the stream. Other interesting species around the clearing included **White-crested Hornbill** *Tropicranus albocristatus*, **Red-billed Dwarf Hornbill** *Tockus camurus*, **Cassin's** *Neafrapus cassini* and **Sabine's Spinetails** *Rhaphidura sabini*, and **Olivaceous Flycatcher** *Muscicapa olivascens*. At night, **African Wood Owl**, **Sjöstedt's Owlet** *Glaucidium sjostedti* and **Nkulengu Rail** *Himantornis haematopus* added to the chorus of **genets** and **Tree Hyraxes** *Dendrohyrax dorsalis*. On one occasion I heard calls matching those of **Shelley's Eagle Owl** on the Chappuis (2000) CDs, but their owner could not be coaxed into view.

The trail to the south continues beyond Boumir, forking after a few hundred metres. After *c.*1 km the trail to the left reaches a large inselberg and from there to a picathartes colony. The trail to the right traverses two streams before, again after *c.*1 km, leading to the 'Grand Rocher', the largest inselberg in the area. I found the first of the two streams along this path to be productive. Many birds came to drink and a number of quiet vigils yielded good views of **White-bellied Kingfisher** *Alcedo leucogaster*, **Blue-headed Bee-eater** *Merops muelleri*, **Black-capped** *Illadopsis cleaveri* and **Brown Illadopsis** *I. fulvescens*, and **Dusky Crested Flycatcher** *Elminia nigromitrata*. I also had sightings of **Congo Serpent Eagle** and **Dusky Long-tailed Cuckoo** *Cercococcyx mechowi*, the latter coming in very close to my whistled imitation of its 'long-call'. **Chocolate-backed Kingfishers** *Halcyon badia* were frequent but extremely hard to see in the canopy.

Picathartes colony

The path to the colony first crosses an extensive grass- and rock-covered inselberg with an avifauna very distinct from the surrounding forest. **Long-legged Pipit** *Anthus pallidiventris* and **Chattering Cisticola** *Cisticola anonymus* were abundant and **Freckled Nightjar** *Caprimulgus tristigma* roosted on areas of rock pavement. I was surprised to see a single **Purple Glossy Starling** *Lamprotornis purpureus* here, presumably a wanderer from the savannas. Other oddities included a juvenile **Rock Pratincole** *Glareola nuchalis*, miles from water, and a **Woolly-necked Stork** *Ciconia episcopus*. Another singing **Zenker's Honeyguide** was at the forest edge. Also interesting was a regular northbound passage of small groups of **European Bee-eaters** *Merops apiaster*, totalling *c.*60 birds, over the inselbergs. This species reputedly avoids the rainforest zones (Borrow & Demey 2001).

From the inselberg, the trail re-enters forest before descending rapidly to the base of a long cliff face on which I counted *c.*100 picathartes nests. The best time to visit is at dawn (requiring a 05.30 hrs start from Boumir), when many rockfowl attend the colony. At this time you can be literally surrounded by them, providing an unforgettable experience. I saw at least seven in 30 minutes, some at very close range, and heard *c.*12 others, whilst displaying **Rufous-sided Broadbills** *Smithornis rufolateralis* provided a diverting

sideshow. I also observed a **Yellow-throated Cuckoo** *Chrysococcyx flavigularis* there. Jackson informed me that the rockfowl are unaccountably absent from the colony during August.

There is a small marsh *c.*1 km south of the colony where I heard **Dja River Warbler** singing. Unfortunately access to the open areas is very difficult here as elephants have turned the approach into a muddy morass.

Grand Rocher

The right-hand trail from Boumir leads to the 'Grand Rocher', splitting again here, the left fork going to the inselberg with the trail to the right continuing south. The area of forest at the point just before the trail leads onto the inselberg regularly contained mixed-species flocks that often appeared almost static. **Malimbe** flocks were a feature with **Cassin's**, **Crested** *M. malimbicus* and **Red-crowned** *M. coronatus* all regular. It would be worth searching these thoroughly for **Bates's Weaver**, which I did not find. Other birds included **Buff-spotted** *Campethera nivosa* and **Brown-eared Woodpeckers** *C. caroli*, **Chestnut-capped** *Erythrocercus mccallii*, **Fraser's Forest** *Fraseria ocreata* and **Shrike Flycatchers** *Megabyas flammulatus*, and **Blue Cuckoo-shrike** *Coracina azurea*.

'Grand Rocher' is the largest inselberg in the Boumir area, with an almost prairie-like habitat. An elevated rocky pavement provides an ideal viewing platform across the grassland and the surrounding forest canopy. The extent of the forest can be appreciated here, with an endless carpet of green visible in all directions. Flights of **Black-casqued Hornbills** *Ceratogymna atrata* and **Grey Parrots** *Psittacus erithacus* passed overhead and numbers of spinetails were often also present, once including two **Black Spinetails** *Telacanthura melanopygia*. **Crowned Eagle** *Stephanoaetus coronatus* could often be seen over the canopy. I flushed a ground-roosting **Bates's Nightjar** *Caprimulgus batesi* at the forest edge; the bird landed in a nearby tree, providing excellent views. Mixed sunbird flocks, comprising **Johanna's** *Cinnyris johannae*, **Green-throated** *Chalcomitra rubescens*, **Little Green** *Anthreptes seimundi* and **Tiny Sunbirds** *Cinnyris minullus*, were present in flowering trees bordering the clearing, and prominent snags were occupied by vigilant **Blue-throated Rollers** *Eurystomus gularis*.

According to Jackson, the trail to the south leads a further 10 km to an extensive marsh where large numbers of elephants congregate. This could well be worth a visit for those with sufficient time and energy.

Mammals

Due to poaching pressure many mammals, especially the larger species, such as **Western Lowland Gorilla** *Gorilla gorilla gorilla*, **African Forest Elephant** *Loxodonta cyclotis*, **Forest Buffalo** *Syncerus caffer nanus* and **Leopard** *Panthera pardus*, have moved to the interior of the park. Those searching for mammals should therefore concentrate on the Boumir area. Jackson informed me that the presence of visitors at Boumir also discourages poachers, which in turn encourages mammals to concentrate there. I saw far greater numbers of forest mammals here than in any other area of forest in Cameroon, including Korup. Especially impressive were the numbers and variety of primates. I recorded both **Lowland Gorilla** and **Chimpanzee** *Pan troglodytes* in the area of the picathartes colony. Good numbers of **Guereza Colobus** *Colobus guereza*, **Putty-nosed Monkey** *Cercopithecus nictitans nictitans*, **Moustached Guenon** *C. cephus*, **Grey-cheeked Mangabey** *Lophocebus albigena* and **Crowned Monkey** *Cercopithecus pogonias* were also evident around Boumir. Inselbergs, such as 'Grand Rocher', provide excellent platforms for viewing primates. At dusk it is worthwhile spending some time on 'Grand Rocher', as **Forest Buffalo** leave the surrounding forest to feed on the open grassland. I had excellent views of a family of five at a range of *c.*50 m. The nocturnal **Bay Duiker** *Cephalophus dorsalis* also frequents forest edge alongside the inselbergs, where they can occasionally be seen by torchlight. The diurnal **Blue Duiker** *C. monticola* is the commonest duiker and is frequently found lying up after dark. I also saw **Peter's Duiker** *C. callipygus* once by day and found remains of a **Yellow-backed Duiker** *C. silvicultor* killed by poachers. Signs of elephants were everywhere, but I was not lucky (or unlucky) enough to encounter one. According to Jackson, **Golden Cat** *Felis aurata*, **Water Chevrotain** *Hyemoschus aquaticus* and **Royal Antelope** *Neotragus pygmaeus* all occur in the reserve. He also described **Agile Mangabey** *Cercocebus agilis* and **De Brazza's Monkey** *Cercopithecus neglectus* as being present.


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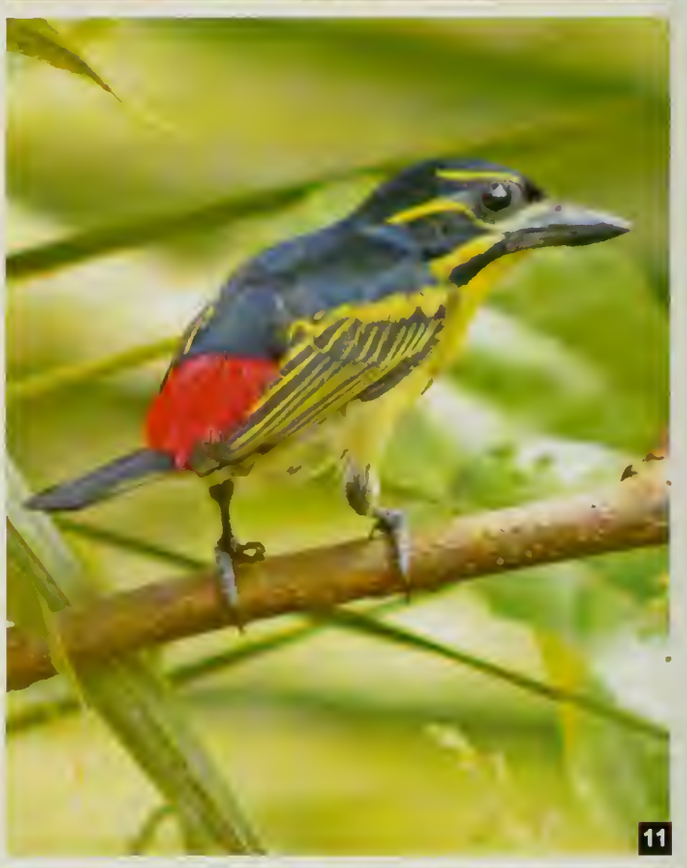
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Captions to photos on opposite page

Figure 8. Western Bluebill / Sénégali sanguin *Spermophaga haematina* (Pete Morris/Birdquest)

Figure 9. White-crested Hornbill / Calao à huppe blanche *Tropicranus albocristatus* (Pete Morris/Birdquest)

Figure 10. Yellow-browed Camaroptera / Camaroptère à sourcils jaunes *Camaroptera superciliaris* (Bernard Van Elegem)

Figure 11. Red-rumped Tinkerbird / Barbion à croupion rouge *Pogoniulus atroflavus* (Pete Morris/Birdquest)

Figure 12. Green Hylia / Hylia verte *Hylia prasina* (Bernard Van Elegem)

One noteworthy place to see **Chimpanzee** is in the riverine forest along the Dja just behind the ECOFAC forest guard buildings in Somalomo. The presence of the guards presumably deters poachers, making it a safe place for them. They visit the canopy just before dusk and can be seen from the track to the river. **Northern Talapoin** *Miopithecus ogouensis* is also found in this area.

As always in rainforest, birding in Dja can often be slow and good sites are difficult to pin-point in the vast area covered by the reserve. I hope this article encourages birders to visit and thus contribute to the protection of this fascinating area. There certainly remains much to be discovered and productive sites other than those mentioned above will doubtless be found. For those who enjoy finding their own birds in little-known places Dja reserve is a paradise.

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to Bill Quantrill, Ron Demey and Richard Webb for encouragement and assistance with the preparation of this article.

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Recent Reports

These are largely unconfirmed records published for interest only; **records are mostly from 2006, with a few from earlier dates.** We thank all birders who have sent in their records and urge them to submit full details to the relevant national or regional organisations. It is suggested that observations of each species be compared with relevant literature to set new data in context and that observers who are unfamiliar with the status of birds in a particular country refer to R. J. Dowsett's (1993) Afrotropical avifaunas: annotated country checklists (in: R. J. Dowsett & F. Dowsett-Lemaire. *A Contribution to the Distribution and Taxonomy of Afrotropical and Malagasy Birds.* Tauraco Res. Rep. 5. Liège: Tauraco Press) or more recent or appropriate sources before submitting records.

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Les observations ci-après sont en majeure partie non confirmées et sont publiées uniquement dans le but d'informer. **La plupart des données sont de 2006; quelques-unes sont plus anciennes.** Nous remercions tous les ornithologues qui ont pris la peine de nous faire parvenir leurs données et nous recommandons de les envoyer, dûment documentées, aux organisations nationales ou régionales concernées. Il est conseillé de vérifier le statut des espèces observées dans la littérature appropriée, afin de mettre les nouvelles données en perspective, et de consulter notamment R. J. Dowsett (1993) Afrotropical avifaunas: annotated country checklists (en: R. J. Dowsett & F. Dowsett-Lemaire. *A Contribution to the Distribution and Taxonomy of Afrotropical and Malagasy Birds.* Tauraco Res. Rep. 5. Liège: Tauraco Press) ou des sources plus récentes ou appropriées.

Angola

A **Pennant-winged Nightjar** *Macrodipteryx vexillarius* was photographed *c.*10 km offshore from Cabinda on 26 July 2006 (*BD*).

Belated records from 2005 include the following. In the Mount Moco area, Huambo, visited on 11–17 August, Afromontane forests were found to be highly disturbed, and have almost certainly been reduced significantly in size since the 1970s. Nonetheless, birds seen here included endemic subspecies of **Western Green Tinkerbird** *Pogoniulus coryphaeus*, **Bocage's Akalat** *Sheppardia bocagei*, **Mountain Chat** *Oenanthe monticola*, **Evergreen Forest Warbler** *Bradypterus lopezi*, **Grey Apalis** *Apalis cinerea*, **African Hill Babbler** *Pseudoalcippe abyssinica* and **Swee Waxbill** *Coccopygia melanotis*. The call of a francolin was recorded and subsequently identified as belonging to **Swierstra's Francolin** *Francolinus swierstrai*. At a nearby mountain, a pair of **Verreaux's Eagle** *Aquila verreauxii*, not previously recorded this far north in Angola, was watched hunting along a ridge, and a pale-morph **Booted Eagle** *Hieraaetus pennatus*, apparently only the third country record, was seen. Three pairs of **Swierstra's Francolin** were found.

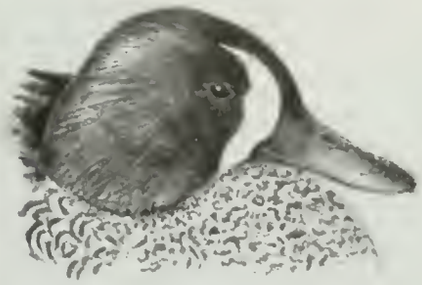
Brazza's Martin / Hirondelle de Brazza *Phedina brazzae* (Pete Leonard)

The most interesting find in the Cassongue area, Cuanza Sul, on 18 August, was **Brazza's Martin** *Phedina brazzae*, which was seen in two consecutive river valleys, a range extension of *c.*800 km. This species was again seen about two weeks later, *c.*100 km to the east, and is suspected to breed in the region at low densities.

Records of **Dusky Long-tailed Cuckoo** *Cercococcyx mechowi*, **Least Honeyguide** *Indicator exilis* and **Mountain Chat** at Kumbira Forest represented range extensions. Elsewhere in the Gabela area, **Yellow-throated Tinkerbird** *Pogoniulus bilineatus* was found to be fairly common; this species was previously known only from Cabinda. Another range extension in this area was **Little Green Sunbird** *Anthreptes seimundi* (*MM*).

Azores

The following records are from May–November 2006. The second **Herald Petrel** *Pterodroma arminjoniana* for the Azores was a pale morph photographed 30–40 km north of Faial on 17 May; the first was a dark morph off Pico on 18 July 1997. Another was seen south of Corvo on 29 October. The first **Black-browed Albatross** *Thalassarche melanophris* for the Azores was a first-year photographed south of Faial on 13 September. A juvenile **Pied-billed Grebe** *Podilymbus podiceps* was present on Corvo, on 29 October, and a juvenile **Double-crested Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax auritus* on São Miguel, from 25 October into November.



Blue-winged Teal / Sarcelle à ailes bleues *Anas discors* (Pete Leonard)

At Fajã Grande, Flores, a **Green Heron** *Butorides virescens* was observed on 22 October–2 November, two **Snowy Egrets** *Egretta thula* from 3 November and an **American Great Egret** *E. alba egretta* from 31 October to at least 8 November. The latter taxon was also present on São Miguel on 30 September and 1 October and on Terceira on 19 October. The long-staying **Great Blue Heron** *Ardea herodias* from 22 September 2005 (*Bull. ABC* 13: 98) was still present at Lagoa Branca, Flores, in early November; from 17 October into November at least four others were found on the island.

Rare geese for which there were only one or two previous records included three **Pink-footed Geese** *Anser brachyrhynchus* at Albarnaz lighthouse, Flores, on 9 October, and one at Alchada das Furnas, São Miguel, on 22–24 October, a **Barnacle Goose** *Branta leucopsis* at Ribeira do Mainho, Ponta Delgada, Flores, from 30 October until 5 November, and **Pale-bellied Brent Geese** *B.* (*bernicla*) *hrota* (probably of Nearctic origin) at Ponta Delgada on 3 October and 3 November, at Cabo da Praia, Terceira, from 9 October until 2 November, at Santa Cruz, Flores, on 25 October, and at Fajã Grande, Flores, on 28 October.

As usual at this time of year, several vagrant Nearctic waterfowl were recorded. **Blue-winged Teal** *Anas discors* were at Lagoa Azul, São Miguel, until 6 October, at Faja dos Cubres, São Jorge, on 20 October, and at Lagoa Seca, Flores, on 7–8 November (two). On Flores, an **American Wigeon** *A. americana*, 16 presumed **Green-winged Teal** *A. carolinensis* and seven **Ring-necked Ducks** *Aythya collaris* were found at Lagoa Seca on 7–8 November. A few American Wigeon and Ring-necked Ducks were also reported from São Miguel, Terceira, São Jorge and/or Pico. **Lesser Scaups** *A. affinis* were present at Pedro Miguel, Faial, on 1 November (one), at Sete Cidades, São Miguel, on 3 November (six), at Lagoa Azul, on 5 November, and at Lagoa dos Patos, on 4 November (one). The long-staying **Wood Duck** *Aix sponsa* of presumed wild origin was still present in a park at Furnas, São Miguel, in early November. An **American Coot** *Fulica americana* remained at Lagoa das Furnas, São Miguel, until at least 5 November, whilst another was found at Lagoa do Caiado, Pico, on 2 November.

Six **Jack Snipes** *Lymnocryptes minimus* on Corvo on 6 October constituted the sixth record for the Azores. Single **Marsh Sandpipers** *Tringa stagnatilis* were at Cabo da Praia, Terceira, on 22 September and at Lajes do Pico, Pico, on 5 October; these are the fifth and sixth for the archipelago.

Vagrant Nearctic waders in the period May–August included a **Semipalmated Plover** *Charadrius semipalmatus* at Cabo da Praia, Terceira, on 11 June, three **Short-billed Dowitchers** *Limnodromus griseus* and a **Greater Yellowlegs** *Tringa melanoleuca* at Caldeira, Corvo, on 25 May, a **Least Sandpiper** *Calidris minutilla* at Lajes do Pico, on 14 August, and a **Spotted Sandpiper** *Actitis macularius* also there, on 12–14 August, with another at Lagoa das Furnas, São Miguel, on 6 August.

In September–early November, many more vagrant Nearctic waders were found. A juvenile **Killdeer** *Charadrius vociferus* was on Corvo on at least 27–29 October. At Cabo da Praia, Terceira, the following were seen from mid-September to at least early November: up to two **Semipalmated Plovers**, five **American Golden Plovers** *Pluvialis dominica*, four **Semipalmated Sandpipers** *Calidris pusilla*, a **Western Sandpiper** *C. mauri*, a **Least Sandpiper**, *c.*18 **White-rumped Sandpipers** *C. fuscicollis*, a **Baird's Sandpiper** *C. bairdii*, three **Pectoral Sandpipers** *C. melanotos*, a **Short-billed Dowitcher**, 2–4 **Long-billed Dowitchers** *Limnodromus scolopaceus* (first records for the Azores), a **Greater Yellowlegs**, four **Lesser Yellowlegs** *Tringa flavipes* and five **Spotted Sandpipers**.

Some of these species were also found on other islands, including **American Golden Plovers** (on São Miguel and Faial), **Semipalmated Plovers** (Flores and Corvo), **Semipalmated Sandpipers** (São Miguel and Pico), **White-rumped Sandpipers** (Flores and Corvo), **Pectoral Sandpipers** (Corvo), **Lesser Yellowlegs** (Flores and Corvo) and **Spotted Sandpipers** (Pico and Flores).

Least Sandpipers were also present at Ponta Delgada, Flores, on 13 September and at Lajes do Pico, Pico, on 19–21 September. A **Wilson's Snipe** *Gallinago delicata*, the ninth for the Azores, was at Caldeirão, Corvo, on 6 October. **Short-billed Dowitchers** were also seen at Ponta Delgada, São Miguel, from 9 September and at Lajes do Pico on 21–22 September and 2 November. A **Hudsonian Whimbrel** *Numenius phaeopus hudsonicus* was noted north of Praia da Vitoria, Terceira, on 5 October. At Ponta Delgada, Flores, an **Upland Sandpiper** *Bartramia longicauda* remained from 29 September until 8 October. The third and fourth records of **Willet** *Catoptrophorus semipalmatus* came from Fajã dos Cubres, São Jorge, on 22 September and Ponta Delgada on 4 November.

A **Laughing Gull** *Larus atricilla* was in Praia harbour, Graciosa, on 9 June; two were present at Cabo da Praia, Terceira, on 21 September. A first-winter **American Herring Gull** *L. argentatus smithsonianus* was identified at Ponta Delgada, Flores, on 3–5 November. A **Caspian Tern** *Sterna caspia*, apparently the third for the Azores, stayed at Lagoa Rasa, Flores, from 30 September until 8 October. An unpaired **Bridled Tern** *S. anaethetus* was incubating an egg

on Praia islet, off Graciosa, on at least 10–19 June; perhaps the same individual was seen there on 1–18 August.

Two **Eurasian Collared Doves** *Streptopelia decaocto* at Cabo da Praia, Terceira, on 16–18 September, were the first for the Azores. At Fajã Grande, Flores, a **Black-billed Cuckoo** *Coccyzus erythrophthalmus* was observed on 28–29 October and a **Yellow-billed Cuckoo** *C. americanus* on 26 October; another Yellow-billed Cuckoo was at Ponta Delgada on 1 November. **Chimney Swifts** *Chaetura pelagica* were reported from Corvo (on 29 and 31 October and 2 November) and Flores (one at Santa Cruz on 31 October, two at Ladeira da Picada on 1 November and one at Fajã Grande on 1 November). The female **Belted Kingfisher** *Ceryle alcyon* at Santa Cruz, Graciosa, from 9 December 2005 (*Bull. ABC* 13: 220), was still present on 22 March.

Two **American Barn Swallows** *Hirundo rustica erythrogaster* were seen on Corvo on 20–29 October; the first for the Azores were reported in 2005. The first **Blue-headed Wagtail** *Motacilla f. flava* for the Azores was discovered at Lajes do Pico, Pico, on 24 September and the second **Whinchat** *Saxicola rubetra* near Pico do Lourenço, Flores, on 4 November. If accepted, a female **Black-eared Wheatear** *Oenanthe melanoleuca/hispanica* at Albarnaz lighthouse, Flores, on 9 October, will be the first for the Azores. Two more firsts included a **Pied Flycatcher** *Ficedula hypoleuca* at Sete Cidades, São Miguel, on 27 October and two juvenile **Red-backed Shrikes** *Lanius collurio* on Corvo on 22–26 October. A **Greenland Redpoll** *Carduelis flammea rostrata* on Corvo on 21 October was the second redpoll for the Azores.

Common Yellowthroat / Paruline masquée *Geothlypis trichas* (Pete Leonard)

In October, several vagrant Nearctic passerines were reported: **Red-eyed Vireos** *Vireo olivaceus* on Corvo on 23–25 and 28 October (second and third records), a first-winter female **Black-throated Blue Warbler** *Dendroica caerulescens* on Corvo on 24 and 28–29 October, with a first-winter male on 29th (second and third records), three single first-winter **Myrtle Warblers** *D. coronata* on Corvo on 21, 25 and 26 October (second to fourth records), a **Blackpoll Warbler** *D. striata* at Aldeia da Cuada, Flores, on 24 October (first record), a male **Common Yellowthroat** *Geothlypis trichas* at Fajázinha, Flores, on 20–21 October (second record) and a **Summer Tanager** *Piranga rubra* on Corvo on 26 and 28 October (first record). On Corvo, an adult **Lapland Bunting** *Calcarius lapponicus* seen on 21 October could be either of Nearctic or Palearctic origin. On the same island, a female **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** *Pheucticus ludovicianus* was observed on 23 October, and a male and female on 24th, whilst **Indigo Buntings** *Passerina cyanea* were found on 24, 27 and 29 October and 1 November; other Indigo Buntings were seen on Flores, at Aldeia da Cuada on 24–25 October and at Fajã Grande on 28th (per *Birding World* 19: 210–211, 324, 376–377, 424–427; *Dutch Birding* 28: 174, 242–253, 316–324, 371–390).

Botswana

Records from June–December 2006 include the following. In July, in the Gaborone area, were 31 **Great Crested Grebes** *Podiceps cristatus*, including a pair with a 10–14 day-old juvenile, at Bokka Dam and nine at Moshupa Dam. On the Boteti River, in the southern Okavango Delta, *c.*1,000 **Great White Pelicans** *Pelecanus onocrotalus* were seen on 28 July and at Lake Ngami some 342 in late July. The highest winter count of **Slaty Egrets** *Egretta vinaceigula* was of 27 on the Jao/Ketswane Flats, in the Okavango, in July. A large winter

Captions to plates on opposite page

Figure 1. African Pitta / Brève de l'Angola *Pitta angolensis*, Kinshasa, DR Congo, 14 October 2006 (Filip Verbelen)

Figure 2. American Golden Plover / Pluvier bronzé *Pluvialis dominica*, Ziguinchor, Senegal, 15 October 2006 (Arthur Geilvoet)

Figure 3. American Golden Plover / Pluvier bronzé *Pluvialis dominica*, Raso, Cape Verde Islands, 21 October 2006 (Edwin Winkel)

Figure 4. Cape Verde Purple Herons / Hérons de Bourne *Ardea* (*purpurea*) *bournei*, Ribeira da Montanha, Santiago, Cape Verde Islands, 15 October 2006 (Edwin Winkel)

Figure 5. Elegant Tern / Sterne élégante *Sterna elegans*, Strandfontein sewage works, Western Cape, South Africa, January 2006 (Trevor Hardaker)

Figure 6. Semipalmated Plover / Pluvier (Gravelot) semipalmé *Charadrius semipalmatus*, Tarrafal, Santiago, Cape Verde Islands, 17 October 2006 (Edwin Winkel)

Figure 7. Madeiran Storm-petrel / Océanite de Castro *Oceanodroma castro*, Raso, Cape Verde Islands, 22 October 2006 (Edwin Winkel)

Figure 8. Irania / Iranie à gorge blanche *Irania gutturalis*, near Williston, Northern Cape, South Africa, 15 July 2006 (Ockert Lombard)

Figure 9. Western Reef Heron / Aigrette à gorge blanche *Egretta gularis schistacea*, Rondebult Bird Sanctuary, Gauteng, South Africa, 15 April 2006 (Chris van Rooyen)

Figure 10. Common Scoters / Macreuses noires *Melanitta nigra*, Tunisia, 10 March 2006 (Hichem Azafzaf)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flock of 213 **White Storks** *Ciconia ciconia* was at Sojwe Pan on 11 June and 94 were at Lake Ngami on 20 August. Along the Chobe River, between the old Chobe National Park entrance and Ngoma Bridge, more than 16,000 birds were counted in July. A total of 92 **Yellow-billed Storks** *Mycteria ibis*, over 10,000 **White-faced Whistling Ducks** *Dendrocygna viduata* and 3,500 **Knob-billed Ducks** *Sarkidiornis melanotus* were of note. One **Fulvous Whistling Duck** *Dendrocygna bicolor* was seen at Ramotswa sewage ponds. **Maccoa Duck** *Oxyura maccoa* numbered 17 at Bokaa Dam, ten at Gamoleele Dam, one at Bathoen Dam and eight at Jwaneng sewage ponds (per *ST*).

An adult **Egyptian Vulture** *Neophron percnopterus* was seen in the Tuli Block on 18 June (*DM*). Surveys by air in northern Botswana revealed 172 nests of **African White-backed Vultures** *Gyps africanus*, nine nests of **Lappet-faced Vultures** *Torgos tracheliotus*, 12 nests of **White-headed Vulture** *Trigonoceps occipitalis* and many nests of other raptors and storks. In the south **Jackal Buzzard** *Buteo rufofuscus* sightings have been more frequent, with birds noted near Otse and Lobatse. A flock of **Wattled Cranes** *Bugeranus carunculatus* was observed along the Boteti River and another flock of 17 at Mea Pan in May (per *ST*).

Few unusual waders were seen in this period, but there was a **Whimbrel** *Numenius phaeopus* at Chanoga on the Boteti River on 11 August, three **Sanderling** *Calidris alba* at Sua Spit in the Makgadikgadi system on 8 October and a **Green Sandpiper** *Tringa ochropus* at Lobatse sewage ponds on 3 November. There were seven **White-fronted Plovers** *Charadrius marginatus* at Sua Spit on 11 June and 8 October and one at Shashe Dam on 1 July, whilst seven **Chestnut-banded Plovers** *C. pallidus* were seen at Sua Pan and 46 at Mea Pan, including 19 juveniles (per *ST*). Four immature **Lesser Black-backed Gulls** *Larus fuscus* were at Lake Ngami on 29 August (*CBr*).

Egyptian Vulture / Vautour percnoptère *Neophron percnopterus* (Pete Leonard)

A dead **Pennant-winged Nightjar** *Macrodipteryx vexillarius* was found at Phakalane, just north of Gaborone on 15 September; this is far south of its usual range. In November a **Broad-billed Roller** *Eurystomus glaucurus* was seen just north of Lobatse, the first record of this migrant in south-east Botswana. Also outside their known range were **Bradfield's Hornbill** *Tockus bradfieldi*, **Spike-heeled Lark** *Chersomanes albofasciata* and **Dusky Sunbird** *Cinnyris fuscus* in the Groot Laagte area, north of Ghanzi, on 28 August.

Since the discovery of **South African Cliff Swallows** *Hirundo spilodera* nesting at Ramatlabama in 2000, a further four colonies have been located in south-east Botswana, the most recent being *c.*50 pairs on a derelict house at Papatlo, north-west of Ramatlabama (per *ST*).

Cameroon

An adult **Verreaux's Eagle** *Aquila verreauxii* was claimed from the area near Banyang Mbo Wildlife Sanctuary, in the south-west, on 2 April 2006; this is remarkably far south and would constitute the first record for Cameroon (*FS & SS*).

Canary Islands

The following records are from May–October 2006. On 2–6 May, seabirds counted off Puerto Rico, Gran Canaria, included 14 **Bulwer's Petrels** *Bulweria bulwerii*, two (Madeira) **Little Shearwaters** *Puffinus assimilis baroli*, one **Great Shearwater** *P. gravis*, two **Wilson's Storm-petrels** *Oceanites oceanicus*, ten **White-faced Storm-petrels** *Pelagodroma marina*, one **Leach's Storm-petrel** *Oceanodroma leucorhoa* and nine **Madeiran Storm-petrels** *O. castro* (per *Dutch Birding* 28: 170). Sightings from Fuerteventura include a **Squacco Heron** *Ardeola ralloides* at Catalina García on 8 June, with two there the following day (*MB*), a **Glossy Ibis** *Plegadis falcinellus* also there on 25 September, a **Sacred Ibis** *Threskiornis aethiopicus* at Moro Jable on 29 September (per *Birding World* 19: 427), 38 **Ruddy Shelducks** *Tadorna ferruginea* at Los Molinos on 6 June and 21 at Catalina García on 9 June (*MB*), a **Blue-winged Teal** *Anas discors* at the latter site on 28–30 September, a **Ring-necked Duck** *Aythya collaris* also there on 25–30th and a dark-morph **Booted Eagle** *Hieraaetus pennatus* on 25th. A pale-morph **Booted Eagle** was at El Fraile, Tenerife, on 20 September (per *Birding World* 19: 427).

Vagrant waders in September–October included a juvenile **Eurasian Dotterel** *Charadrius morinellus* at Punto Teno, Tenerife, on 10 September, an **American Golden Plover** *Pluvialis dominica* at Los Molinos, Fuerteventura, on 26 September, and another at La Santa, Lanzarote, on 15 October, a **Semipalmated Sandpiper** *Calidris pusilla* at Playa de Sotavento, Fuerteventura, on 28 September, single **White-rumped Sandpipers** *C. fuscicollis* at Salinas de los Cocoteros, Lanzarote, on 23rd and at Los Molinos, Fuerteventura, on 26th, a **Pectoral Sandpiper** *C. melanotos* at El Fraile, Tenerife, on 16 September, with two there on 20th–23rd, and another at Catalina García, Fuerteventura, on 25–29th, with two there on 30th, a **Hudsonian Whimbrel** *Numenius phaeopus hudsonicus* at Punta Cruz, Tenerife, on 12th, a **Lesser Yellowlegs** *Tringa flavipes* at Catalina García, Fuerteventura, on 25th, a **Spotted Sandpiper** *Actitis macularius* at San Barolomé de Tirajana, Gran Canaria, on 1 October, and a **Wilson's Phalarope** *Phalaropus tricolor* at El Fraile, Tenerife, on 20–23 September (per *Birding World* 19: 377, 427).

An **Isabelline Wheatear** *Oenanthe isabellina* was observed at Amarilla

Golf Course, Tenerife, on 23 September (per *Birding World* 19: 427).

Cape Verde Islands

Besides the **Spur-winged Lapwing** *Vanellus spinosus*, already reported in the last Recent Reports (*Bull. ABC* 13: 223), a **European Golden Plover** *Pluvialis apricaria* was at Tarrafal, Santiago, on 4 March 2006; both records might represent firsts for the islands (per *Dutch Birding* 28: 172).

The following records are from October 2006. A relatively high number of **Madeiran Storm-petrels** *Oceanodroma castro* was present on Raso, where many dozens could be seen and heard every night on 20th–23rd (Fig. 7); the species is considered scarce on the islet nowadays. The once flourishing **Brown Booby** *Sula leucogaster* colony on Raso (*c.*125 pairs in 1986–92) has decreased dramatically: no more than 40 were counted around the main colony on 20th–23rd. On the same dates, a **Cattle Egret** *Bubulcus ibis* was hunting insects each morning and afternoon close to the landing spot; the species is rare on Raso (*EW*). The sixth **Squacco Heron** *Ardeola ralloides* for the Cape Verdes was found at Ribeira Brava, São Nicolau, on 27 September (per *Dutch Birding* 28: 372).

At least 21 **Cape Verde Purple Herons** *Ardea* (*purpurea*) *bournei*, including eight adults, three subadults and ten juveniles, were present in the large mahogany tree at Banana, Ribeira da Montanha, the world's only colony of this taxon, on 15th (Fig. 4). There were at least seven active nests, with two still occupied by incubating adults. A **Cape Verde Buzzard** *Buteo* (*buteo*) *bannermani* was soaring with three Brown-necked Ravens *Corvus ruficollis* in the Serra do Pico da Antónia, just south of Assomada, Santiago, on 18th. On the same date, a **Cape Verde Peregrine** *Falco peregrinus madens* was seen on the flanks of the Monte Gordo, the highest mountain of São Nicolau.

A **Semipalmated Plover** *Charadrius semipalmatus*, photographed south of Tarrafal, Santiago, on 17th (Fig. 6), constitutes the fifth record for the Cape Verdes. The 11th **American Golden Plover** *Pluvialis dominica* for the islands stayed briefly on Raso on 21st (Fig. 3). A single **Common Swift** *Apus apus* was hunting over the arid plains east of Praia, Santiago, on 14th.

During a survey of more than half of the suitable habitat, 60 **Raso Larks** *Alauda razae* were counted on 20th–23rd. Three nests were found of which one contained an egg; no fledglings or juveniles were seen. Three **Barn Swallows** *Hirundo rustica* were present each day on the south-east side of the islet. A **Cape Verde Cane Warbler** *Acrocephalus brevipennis* was singing in an irrigated agricultural area south of Tarrafal, Santiago, on 17th; this is the first record in the north of the island (*EW*).

Central African Republic

Records from the period March–July 2006 from around Djoubissi, *c.*70 north of Bambari, Ouaka Prefecture, in the centre of the country, include 20 **Pallid Swifts** *Apus pallidus* on 18 April, with 50 on 26 April, a **Black-casqued Hornbill** *Ceratogymna atrata* on 7 April, two **Common Redstarts** *Phoenicurus phoenicurus* on 30 March and a **Brown-rumped Bunting** *Emberiza affinis* on 23 July.

In the Pouloubou area, *c.*80 km south-southeast of Bambari, between the towns of Alindao and Mingala, four pairs of **Brown-chested Lapwing** *Vanellus superciliosus* were found in suitable breeding habitat, on 17–27 March. In the same area in March, the following species were observed, adding to our knowledge of their distribution (*cf.* maps in Borrow & Demey, 2004, *Field Guide to the Birds of Western Africa*): **Ross's Turaco** *Tauraco rossae* (one on 23rd), **Thick-billed Cuckoo** *Pachycoccyx audeberti* (one on 23rd, 25th and 26th), **Swallow-tailed Bee-eater** *Merops hirundineus* (one on 16th, four on 23rd, two on 25th), **Black-casqued Hornbill** (two on 25th), **Speckled Tinkerbird** *Pogoniulus scolopaceus* (one on 22nd), **African Pitta** *Pitta angolensis* (one on 19th), **Honeyguide Greenbul** *Baeopogon*

Thick-billed Cuckoo / Coucou d'Audebert *Pachycoccyx audeberti* (Pete Leonard)

indicator (one on 18th), **Winding Cisticola** *Cisticola galactotes* (two on 24th), **Collared Flycatcher** *Ficedula albicollis* (one on 18th, three on 19th, four on 23rd, two on 26th), **Black-winged Oriole** *Oriolus nigripennis* (one on 18th, three on 23rd) and **Shining Drongo** *Dicrurus atripennis* (two on 23rd) (*NV*).

Chad

The following records are from the Lower Chari area, near Lake Chad, in January 2006. A **Barbary Falcon** *Falco pelegrinoides* was seen hunting Red-billed Queleas *Quelea quelea*, with Montagu's *Circus pygargus* and Pallid Harriers *C. macrourus*, on 15th; there is only one other, old record from Chad (Grote, H. 1928. *J. Orn.* 76: 739–783).

Breeding records of **Black-headed Lapwing** *Vanellus tectus* include copulation on 14th, a pair with a fledgling on 27th, and seven nests containing eggs (two with two eggs, five with three) on 17th, 27th and 30th. Less than 10% of the birds were breeding. These data confirm that breeding commences locally in December at the latest, and not in March, as stated in *The Birds of Africa*. Although this species is generally reported to be monogamous, the majority of birds were not in pairs but in trios, a phenomenon not mentioned in the literature for any lapwing.

Only seven **European Turtle Doves** *Streptopelia turtur* were recorded, at *c.*12°45'N 14°55'E, on 30th, which confirms the relative rarity of wintering individuals north of 12°N. Approximately 40 years ago

European Turtle Dove and Black-billed Wood Dove *T. abyssinicus* were considered common in the N'Djaména area, which is no longer the case, whereas the previously uncommon Laughing Dove *S. senegalensis* is now conspicuously commoner than the previous two species. Two groups of **Wattled Starlings** *Creatophora cinerea*, totalling over 100 birds, were seen foraging on dry mud around waterholes on 13–14th, at 12°24'N 15°00'E and *c.*10 km to the south; these appear to constitute the first records of this species for Chad (*BT*).

Congo-Brazzaville

Records from March–October 2006 include the following. A **Black Heron** *Egretta ardesiaca* (with orange feet, black eyes and a black throat) was seen on the beach in Conkouati-Douli National Park in August. **Common Kestrels** *Falco tinnunculus* were seen mobbing crows in Brazzaville suggesting they breed there. Also in Brazzaville, **African Skimmers** *Rynchops flavirostris* were seen feeding at night in the spotlights of a riverside restaurant on the Congo River.

In Lac Télé Community Reserve (LTCR), **Long-legged Pipit** *Anthus pallidiventris* was finally confirmed as the common savanna pipit—a range extension. **Black Spinetail** *Telacanthura melanopygia*, **Grey-throated Flycatcher** *Myioparus griseigularis*, **Shrike Flycatcher** *Megabyas flammulatus* and **Forest Penduline Tit** *Anthoscopus flavifrons* were added to the reserve list in October, July, April and May 2006 respectively. A male **Cuckoo Finch** *Anomalospiza imberbis* was seen in savanna during high floods in October; this species appears not to have been documented in Congo. A juvenile **Cinnamon-breasted Rock Bunting** *Emberiza tahapisi* was seen in short grass in September—a first for the Likouala region.

First and last arrival dates for migrant birds leaving and returning to LTCR in 2006 include the following: **Squacco Heron** *Ardeola ralloides* 24 April (last); **Black Kite** *Milvus migrans parasitus* 2 June (last) and 11 September (first); **Montagu's Harrier** *Circus pygargus* 17 January (last); **Eurasian Marsh Harrier** *C. aeruginosus* 2 April (last); **Great Snipe** *Gallinago media* 17 February (last) and 27 August (first); **Common Swift** *Apus apus* 5 May (last) and 12 August (first); **White-throated Bee-eater** *Merops albicollis* 4 June (last) and 1 October (first); **Grey-rumped Swallow** *Pseudhirundo griseopyga* 23 April (first) and 10 October (last); **South African Cliff Swallow** *Hirundo spilodera* 19 April (first) and 6 October (last); the dates for the latter two species coincide with the departure and arrival of **Barn Swallow** *Hirundo rustica* 9 April (last) and 2 September (first); **Yellow Wagtail** *Motacilla flava* 5 March (last) and 4 November (first); **Whinchat** *Saxicola rubetra* 5 April (last); **Sedge Warbler** *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus* 8 April (last); **Willow Warbler** *Phylloscopus trochilus* 14 October (first); and **Spotted Flycatcher** *Muscicapa striata* 23 April (last) and 5 October (first) (*HR*).

South African Cliff Swallow / Hirondelle sud-africaine *Hirundo spilodera* (Pete Leonard)

DR Congo

An **African Pitta** *Pitta angolensis* was being offered for sale on the market in Kinshasa on 14 October 2006 (Fig. 1); according to the seller the bird came from Basankusu (*FV*).

Egypt

The first **Indian Pond Heron** *Ardeola grayii* for Egypt, a bird photographed on Crocodile Island, Luxor, on 24 April 2004, was published in 2006 (*Alula* 12: 114–119).

Reports from the period March–July 2006 include the following. Two **Pink-backed Pelicans** *Pelecanus rufescens* were seen at Abu Simbel on 10–11 April. Also there in April were up to 25 **Yellow-billed Storks** *Mycteria ibis*, with at least 38 on 19 July. Two **Green-backed Herons** *Butorides striata* in the Abassa region on 19 March were probably the first for the Nile delta. Single **Goliath Herons** *Ardea goliath* were seen at Wadi Lahami on several dates in March and May (see also *Bull. ABC* 13: 224), with an immature there on 14–15 July, and at Shalatein on 22 May. At the latter, up to 28 **Lappet-faced Vultures** *Torgos tracheliotus* were counted in April–May (per *Birding World* 19: 203, 278, 377; *Dutch Birding* 28: 170–175, 243).

A **Baillon's Crake** *Porzana pusilla* was watched at Abu Simbel on 2–3 April (*EF*). On 20 July, an adult **Long-tailed Skua** *Stercorarius longicaudus* was observed at Lake Nasser (per *Birding World* 19: 278). **African Collared Doves** *Streptopelia roseogrisea* were reported from Abu Simbel (one on 30 April) and north of Marsa Alam (up to four in March–May) (per *Birding World* 19: 203). At least three **African Pied Wagtails** *Motacilla aguimp* were seen at Abu Simbel on 10–11 April (per *Dutch Birding* 28: 170–175).

Ethiopia

In 2006, the endemic **Harwood's Francolin** *Francolinus harwoodi* was not only found at its usual site in the Jemma Valley, but also at the base of the cliffs at Debre Libanos, on 8 October (*NB*).

Gabon

A **Lesser Sand Plover** *Charadrius mongolus* was seen on a sandbar at the mouth of the Moka River on 22 July 2006; the species was first recorded in Gabon in 2000 and appears to be a regular vagrant at this locality (*NB*). A juvenile **Yellow-throated Cuckoo** *Chrysococcyx flav-*

igularis was being fed by a pair of Grey-throated Flycatchers *Myioparus griseigularis* in the Ipassa Reserve, Makokou, on 13 October; this is the first record of a host species for this cuckoo (*JC & MM*; for details see pp. 68–69 of this issue). A **Uganda Woodland Warbler** *Phylloscopus budongoensis* was seen well along the Bélinga Road, in the Makokou area, on 30 July; the precise status and distribution of this species in the country is poorly understood (*NB*).

The Gambia

Records from June–November 2006 include the following. A juvenile **Beaudouin's Snake Eagle** *Circaetus beaudouini* flew over Sabi, Upper River Division, on 22 June. A single **Lesser Moorhen** *Gallinula angulata* at Camaloo Corner is a rare coastal record (*KR*). Two **Black-bellied Bustards** *Lissotis melanogaster* flew over the Banjul-Barra river estuary on 24 July (*CB*). An exhausted and moribund **Red Phalarope** *Phalaropus fulicarius* with a missing leg was found at Kotu on 22 August (*SB*). The first confirmed **Sooty Tern** *Sterna fuscata* for The Gambia was watched for *c.*30 minutes and photographed at Tanji Bird Reserve on 25 August (*SB & JO*); what was presumed to be the same individual was seen again on 3 December at the same site (*RA* per *CB*). A **Common Cuckoo** *Cuculus canorus* was photographed at Banjul on 20 October, with another reliable claim from the south of the country around the same time; these may constitute the first records for many decades (per *CB*). A **Plain-backed Pipit** *Anthus leucophrys* and three **Black-faced Quailfinches** *Ortygospiza atricollis* close to the beach at Banjul on 14 September are unusual records for the area (*CB*).

Ghana

Noteworthy records from August 2006 include a **Brown Nightjar** *Veles binotatus* at Kakum on 12th, a **Yellow-footed Honeyguide** *Melignomon eisentrauti* also there on two consecutive mornings on 9–10th, a **Forest Scrub Robin** *Cercotrichas leucosticta* at Atewa on 20th, and an adult and juvenile **Emin's Shrike** *Lanius gubernator* in Mole National Park on 16th (*DHo*).

Guinea

The Monchon Plain, where the pair of **Black-crowned Cranes** *Balearica pavonina* with a juvenile were observed on 21 January 2006 (*Bull ABC* 13: 222–224) is not near Boké, as erroneously stated, but at Boffa (*MCo*).

Records of the following species from the Koubia area, in the northern Fouta Djalon, in June–August 2006, represent slight range extensions compared to the maps in Borrow & Demey (2004. *Field Guide to the Birds of Western Africa*): **Tambourine Dove** *Turtur tympanistria*, **Shining-blue Kingfisher** *Alcedo quadribrachys*, **Spotted Honeyguide** *Indicator maculatus*, **Little Green Woodpecker** *Campethera maculosa* and **Grey-winged Robin Chat** *Cossypha polioptera* (all observed in gallery forest), **Turati's Boubou** *Laniarius turatii* (frequently seen in Koubia), **Heuglin's Masked Weaver** *Ploceus heuglini*, **Black-winged Bishop** *Euplectes hordeaceus* and **Cabanis's Bunting** *Emberiza cabanisi*. **Yellow-mantled Widowbirds** *Euplectes macroura* seen near Labe airport also represent an extension of their known range (*CE*).

Kenya

The following records were reported in May–November 2006. A pair of **Great Crested Grebes** *Podiceps cristatus* with a juvenile was observed at Molo on 14 October 2006; presumably the same birds were seen in July (*CwK*). A **Dwarf Bittern** *Ixobrychus sturmii* was at the Sabaki River mouth on 9 July and a **Madagascar Pond Heron** *Ardeola idae* at Runda Estate, on the northern edge of Nairobi, on 21 June. A white-morph **Western Reef Heron** *Egretta gularis* at Mida Creek on 26 November is an unusual record for the area. Also unusual, at least at this season, was the sighting of an adult **Beaudouin's Snake Eagle** *Circaetus beaudouini* at Mumias, western Kenya, in mid-August. A **Lesser Spotted Eagle** *Aquila pomarina* was seen on the late date of 15 May in Shaba National Reserve. An adult **Eastern Imperial Eagle** *A. heliaca* flew over Ngulia, Tsavo West National Park, around 27 November. An adult **Lesser Jacana** *Microparra capensis* was at Limuru sewage pond in late August; this species is unusual near Nairobi. Two **Eurasian Oystercatchers** *Haematopus ostralegus* at Malindi in late August constitute an early record for this uncommon Palearctic wader. Three **Brown-chested Lapwings** *Vanellus superciliosus* were observed near Keekorok Lodge, Maasai Mara, on 22 June. An early **Temminck's Stint** *Calidris temminckii* was at Lake Naivasha on 14 October. A **Great Black-headed Gull** *Larus ichthyaetus* at Malindi harbour on 30 November was the second this year, after many years without any sightings. At Lake Naivasha, a **Common Black-headed Gull** *L. ridibundus* in non-breeding plumage was spotted on 11 August; this constitutes an early date for this species, which 25–30 years ago was hardly recorded in Kenya. An adult **Heuglin's Gull** *L. heuglini* at Lake Naivasha on 14 October was an unusual record for the Rift (per *CJ*).

A **Bare-faced Go-away Bird** *Corythaixoides personatus*, seen in the first week of August, at Kisumu is also unusual for that area. A **Madagascar Lesser Cuckoo** *Cuculus rochii* was reported from Kakamega Forest in mid-August and a **Half-collared Kingfisher** *Alcedo semitorquata* from Blue Posts, Thika, in late August; the latter is one of the first records for Kenya in *c.*20 years. A **Wahlberg's Honeybird** *Prodotiscus regulus* was observed in Arabuko-Sokoke Forest at the end of August and a **Golden-tailed Woodpecker** *Campethera abingoni* along the Mutembo River, Kongelai Escarpment.

A **Gillett's Lark** *Mirafra gilletti*, photographed in Samburu National Reserve in mid-August, will be the first record from Kenya for decades, if accepted, and the first away from the extreme north-east of the country. A pair of **Angola Swallows** *Hirundo angolensis* seemed to be

Abbott's Starling *l* Spréo d'Abbott *Pholia femoralis* (Pete Leonard)

prospecting for a nest site in Nairobi on 16 October; this species may be spreading east. A new form of pipit **'Nairobi Pipit'**, found in Nairobi National Park a few years ago and part of the Long-billed Pipit *Anthus similis* complex, is regarded as a distinct species by some. A **Lead-coloured Flycatcher** *Myioparus plumbeus* was found nesting in a tree cavity at Lake Baringo on 13 June; there are relatively few nesting records in Kenya (per *CJ*). A pair of **Abbott's Starlings** *Pholia femoralis* was seen entering a cavity with nesting material in Gatamaiyu Forest on 5 October. Perhaps these were the same birds that nested here in 2005 (*Bull ABC* 13: 103); this first breeding record for Kenya was unsuccessful, as the young died when the branch supporting the nest broke. On 14th a female was seen again, but no sign of breeding was observed (*CwK*). A first-year female **Chestnut Sparrow** *Passer eminibey* was ringed at Ngulia on 20 November; this species is very rare at the site (per *CJ*).

Madagascar

Five **Madagascar Fish Eagles** *Haliaeetus vociferoides* were seen in a single morning at Anjajavy, *c.*140 km north of Majunga, on the north-west coast, on 30 August 2006, with three **Madagascar White Ibises** *Threskiornis* (*aethiopicus*) *bernieri* also there (*ID*).

Madeira

Records from June–September 2006 include the following. On a pelagic tour between Madeira and the Selvagens on 26–29 June, more than 100 **White-faced Storm-petrels** *Pelagodroma marina* were seen, most of them near the Selvagens. Other species included more than ten presumed **Fea's Petrels** *Pterodroma feae* (with many more near Deserta Grande on 29–30 June), a few **Manx Shearwaters** *Puffinus puffinus*, a few (Madeira) **Little Shearwaters** *P. assimilis baroli*, two **Wilson's Storm-petrels** *Oceanites oceanicus*, *c.*12 **Madeiran Storm-petrels** *Oceanodroma castro* and, on 29 June, an adult **Red-billed Tropicbird** *Phaethon aethereus* and a first-summer **Sabine's Gull** *Larus sabini* (per *Dutch Birding* 28: 243–253). On 1 September, 5,023 **Great Shearwaters** *Puffinus gravis* were observed off Porto Moniz; the next day 6,600 passed there in two hours (per *Dutch Birding* 28: 316).

Two first-year **Glossy Ibises** *Plegadis falcinellus* were seen on Porto Santo on 10 July (per *Dutch Birding* 28: 320). A **Dark-bellied Brent Goose** *Branta bernicla* was on Porto Santo on 8–12 July (per *Dutch Birding* 28: 316). The second **Common Crane** *Grus grus* for Madeira was at the westernmost tip of the island on 18–19 October (per *Dutch Birding* 28: 372). In the Selvagens, a **Stone-curlew** *Burhinus oedicnemus* and an adult **Sooty Tern** *Sterna fuscata* were found on Selvagem Pequena on 26 June. Two **Alpine Swifts** *Tachymarptis melba* flew over Madeira on 1 July (per *Dutch Birding* 28: 243–253).

Mali

During a waterbird census of the inner Niger delta using a light aircraft from 9 to 23 January 2006, the highest numbers since at least 1991 were recorded for several species, including **Squacco Heron** *Ardeola ralloides* (12,532 individuals), **Cattle Egret** *Bubulcus ibis* (69,690), **Intermediate Egret** *Egretta intermedia* and **Great Egret** *E. alba* (6,500), **Grey Heron** *Ardea cinerea* (8,145), **Spur-winged Goose** *Plectropterus gambensis* (7,895), **Garganey** *Anas querquedula* (815,800), **Northern Shoveler** *A. clypeata* (13,940), **Ferruginous Duck** *Aythya nyroca* (13,590) and **Black-winged Stilt** *Himantopus himantopus* (12,190). Other interesting records include nine **Black Storks** *Ciconia nigra* observed on 21st (apparently the third record for the inner Niger delta), three male **Eurasian Wigeon** *Anas penelope* on 19th, 35 **Common Teal** *A. crecca* (this species has been almost certainly seriously underestimated until now), a **Marbled Duck** *Marmaronetta angustirostris* on 18th and 250 **Common Pochards** *Aythya ferina* (*OG*).

Noteworthy observations made in August 2006 at Agoufou, *c.*35 km north of Hombori (15°35'N 01°47'W), include **Quail-plover** *Ortyxelos meiffrenii* (regular), **Mottled Swift** *Tachymarptis aequatorialis* (a few), **Alpine Swift** *T. melba* (one), **Cricket Warbler** *Spiloptila clamans* (common) and **Desert Cisticola** *Cisticola aridulus* (common, though not marked for the area on the map in Borrow & Demey, 2004, *Field Guide to the Birds of Western Africa*) (*LK*).

Morocco

Records from March–August 2006 include the following. Three **Madeiran Storm-petrels** *Oceanodroma castro* were feeding in Dakhla Bay, Western Sahara, on 11 March. A single **Houbara Bustard** *Chlamydotis undulata* was seen at the species' former stronghold at Tagdilt track, Boumalne-Dadès, on 26 March. In Tafifalt, 12 km north-east of Merzouga, a nest was found but all hatchlings were trapped and taken to a Saudi breeding programme in the first days of April (per *Dutch Birding* 28: 170–181). The second **Buff-breasted Sandpiper** *Tryngites subruficollis* for Morocco was photographed at Ouarzazate on 24 April; the first record was in 1996 (per *Dutch Birding* 28: 250–253). Another was found with an **Upland Sandpiper** *Bartramia longicauda* between Sidi Moussa and Oualidia on 28 September (per *Dutch Birding* 28: 376). A second-year **Baltic Gull** *Larus f. fuscus* ringed at Pori, Finland, on 28 June 2005, was discovered at

Anza, Agadir, on 23 February; this is one of the westernmost ringing recoveries of a gull ringed in Finland for Africa (per *Dutch Birding* 28: 250–253). If accepted, an adult **Kelp Gull** *L. dominicanus vetula* on the beach at Agadir on 28 August will be the first for Morocco (per *Birding World* 19: 324–325; *Dutch Birding* 28: 323). An adult **Common Gull** *L. canus* was at Merja Zerga on 28 May. At least three **Plain Swifts** *Apus unicolor* were identified at Larache on 7 May; this is further north than previous records (per *Birding World* 19: 235).

Three **Dunn's Larks** *Eremalauda dunni* were seen between Dakhla and Awserd (Aoussard), Western Sahara, on 12 March; **Black-crowned Sparrow Larks** *Eremopterix nigriceps* were found to be common there, with at least 25 individuals counted. On 5 April, a **Dupont's Lark** *Chersophilus duponti* was watched at Tizi-n-Taghatine, a western breeding site which was unknown until recently. The third **Citrine Wagtail** *Motacilla citreola* for Morocco was observed at Oued Massa on 17 April (per *Dutch Birding* 28: 170–181). On 12 October, a first-winter **Iberian Chiffchaff** *Phylloscopus ibericus* was photographed at Oukaimeden, High Atlas; several other individuals were also present at this ski resort (per *Dutch Birding* 28: 386). The westernmost **Balearic Woodchat Shrike** *Lanius senator badius* for the country was observed at Aoulouz on 5 April. In Western Sahara, six **Desert Sparrows** *Passer simplex* were seen between Dakhla and Awserd, including a pair with young (per *Dutch Birding* 28: 170–181).

Desert Sparrow / Moineau blanc *Passer simplex* (Pete Leonard)

Mozambique

In March–September 2006, the following records were reported. A **Greater Frigatebird** *Fregata minor* was seen at Inhassoro on 3 September (*ABo*). Large numbers of **Crab Plovers** *Dromas ardeola* were observed at Inhambane on 11 March and a **Common Redshank** *Tringa totanus* was seen at Maputo the next day (*JG & RG*). A **Franklin's Gull** *Larus pipixcan*, found at Lagoa Piti in Maputo Elephant Reserve on 25 May (*AH*), was perhaps the same individual seen in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, on 18–19 May (*TH*). Two **Gull-billed Terns** *Sterna nilotica* were at Rio Savane on 20 September (*CH*).

During a birding trip to southern and central Mozambique in August 2006, excellent views were obtained of a **Great Bittern** *Botaurus stellaris* and of **Locust Finches** *Paludipasser locustella* at Rio Savane, a site known to hold these sought-after species. In the Panda woodlands, presently the only site south of the Zambezi where the localised **Olive-headed Weaver** *Ploceus olivaceiceps* is found, several of these miombo specialists were observed (*EM*).

Namibia

The following records are from March–October 2006. Namibia's first (and southern Africa's third) **Western Reef Heron** *Egretta gularis* was discovered near Kalizi Lodge in the Caprivi Strip on 16 June (*JW & MC*); a bird of the eastern race *schistacea* was reported from South Luangwa National Park in Zambia in February (*Bull. ABC* 13: 230) and also from Rondebult Bird Sanctuary, Gauteng, South Africa, in the second half of April; it is possible that all these sightings involved the same individual. An **Egyptian Vulture** *Neophron percnopterus* was seen in Etosha National Park on 8 September (*DS*). **Common Redshanks** *Tringa totanus* were reported from the Kunene River mouth on 22 February (one; *JG & MBo*), at Mile 4 salt works in Swakopmund on 30 March (one; *MBo*), 10 April (three; per *TH*) and 20 October (three; *MBo*), and at Walvis Bay on 10 September (*JB*). A **Red-necked Phalarope** *Phalaropus lobatus* was still at Mile 4 salt works, Swakopmund, on 30 March (*MBo*). Eleven **Red-necked Phalaropes**, found at Walvis Bay on 23 July (*KW & ED*), were still there on 15 August; one was also there on 1 October (*ABo*). At Swakopmund, a **Franklin's Gull** *Larus pipixcan* was observed on 1 June (*AP & MBo*). Two **Lesser Black-backed Gulls** *L. fuscus* and 20 **Royal Terns** *Sterna maxima* were at the Kunene River mouth on 22 February (*JG & MBo*).

Niger

Details of the three **Hottentot Teal** *Anas hottentota* reportedly shot near Zinder during sampling of wild birds as part of H5N1 avian influenza monitoring in early 2006 (*Bull. ABC* 13: 228) have been received: they were collected at Chemagaji (13°30'N 09°50'E) on 28 February 2006 and were the only Hottentot Teal at the site, which consists of several pools in the desert (per *BP*).

The following records are from the period May–October 2006. Twelve occupied nests of **Intermediate Egrets** *Egretta intermedia* on 5 August, at Les Rôniers in Niamey, constitute the first confirmed breeding record of this species in Niger. It is unclear whether an immature **Purple Heron** *Ardea purpurea* at Saga the next day was also locally bred (unconfirmed for Niger) or involved a second calendar-year bird that did not return to Europe. An adult **European Hobby** *Falco subbuteo* reported from Les Rôniers on 17 September would be only the third record for Niger. Three male **Ruffs** *Philomachus pugnax* at Saga on 16 July are a very early observation. A **Mottled Swift** *Tachymarptis aequatorialis* on 4 June, at the Tapoa Hotel in 'W' National Park, would be the third record for Niger, of which all have been since August 2004. A pair of **Blackstarts** *Cercomela melanura* feeding young in the Dallol Bosso on 3 August and two adult **Yellow-billed Oxpeckers** *Buphagus africanus* feeding two juveniles, at Dougel Kaina opposite Kolo, surprisingly constitute

the first confirmed breeding records for Niger. A **Golden Oriole** *Oriolus oriolus* at Les Rôniers on 2 September would be the second record for Niger (*BP* per *JBr*).

São Tomé & Príncipe

Western Reef Egrets *Egretta gularis* were fishing on the wing in a stiff breeze on the northern coast of São Tomé beyond Guadalupe on 27 September 2006; such behaviour appears unusual. A **Common Sand Martin** *Riparia riparia* over the river in Santo Antonio, Príncipe, on 28 September, appears to be the first for the island (*JC & MM*). Prolonged views of **São Tomé Grosbeak** *Neospiza concolor* were had by a birding group in August 2006, in the south-west corner of the island (*NB*).

Senegal

An exceptionally large flock of 620 **European Storm-petrels** *Hydrobates pelagicus* was foraging with the incoming tide on the Senegal River at St Louis on 20 April 2006 (*PT & VS*). The third **American Golden Plover** *Pluvialis dominica* for the country was photographed at Ziguinchor, Casamance, on 16–17 October (Fig. 2); the previous records were made in May 1979 and October 2005. A **Yellow-breasted Apalis** *Apalis flavida* was observed at Kafountine on 21 October; surprisingly, this appears to be only the second for Senegal (*AG*).

Seychelles

Reports received by Seychelles Bird Records Committee (SBRC) from August–November 2006 include the following. On Cousin, an intermediate-morph **Kermadec Petrel** *Pterodroma neglecta*, recovered on 13 August, proved to be the same individual ringed on the island on 29 June 2004 and presumed to be the same as that photographed on 29 August 2003 (see *Bull. ABC* 13: 88–90); these are the only reports for Seychelles. A **Pectoral Sandpiper** *Calidris melanotos* on D'Arros on 13 November was the fourth report for Seychelles. Two **Common Redshanks** *Tringa totanus* at Roche Caiman Bird

Rufous Fishing Owl / Chouette-pêcheuse rousse *Scotopelia ussheri* (Pete Leonard)

Sanctuary, Mahé, on 2 August, with one at Dauban marsh, La Passe, Silhouette, on 11 September were the fourth and fifth reports. There have been 14 previous records of **Black-headed Gull** *Larus ridibundus* from Seychelles, but one on Bird Island on 25 March–2 April 2006 was more than a month later than any previous record and was the first of an adult in breeding plumage. Other sightings of interest included a **Common Swift** *Apus apus* at D'Arros on 9–12 November. The first **Madagascar Bee-eater** *Merops superciliosus* for Seychelles was at Aldabra on 15–31 October (*AS*).

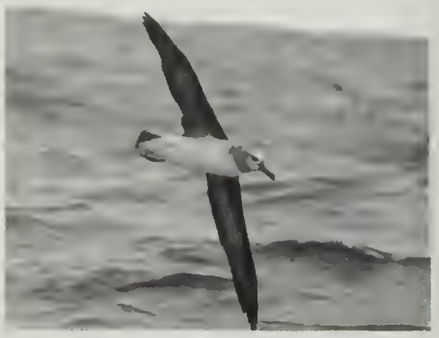
Sierra Leone

The most interesting record of a birding trip in November 2006 involved two **Rufous Fishing Owls** *Scotopelia ussheri* on Tiwaii Island on 14th. Other species of interest, albeit at known localities, included **White-breasted Guineafowl** *Agelastes meleagrides* (five at Zimmi on 15th), **Sierra Leone Prinia** *Schistolais leontica* (one at Bumbuna on 19th) and **Gola Malimbe** *Malimbus ballmanni* (a pair with a juvenile at Gola Forest North on 17th). At Bumbuna, a male indigobird with a greenish-blue gloss, white bill and pale legs, making the contact call of Zebra Waxbill *Sporaeginthus subflavus*, was identified as **Jambandu Indigobird** *Vidua raricola*; other indigobirds in the area, with white bills and red legs, were **Village Indigobirds** *V. chalybeata* (*IS*).

South Africa

The following records are from January–November 2006. On pelagic trips out of Cape Town the following interesting albatrosses were seen: **Wandering Albatross** *Diomedea exulans* on 21 May (one; *RW*), 23 July (one; *JGr*) and 5 August (three; *JGr*); **Southern Royal Albatross** *D.* (*epomophora*) *epomophora*, singles on 1 and 16 September (*JGr*); **Northern Royal Albatross** *D.* (*e.*) *sanfordi* between 13 and 16 April (two; *MG*); singles on 21 May, 8 and 29 July, 5 August, 16 September and 15 October (*JGr, RW*), with one over the Agulhas Banks on 9 May (*PR*); **Salvin's Albatross** *Thalassarche* (*cauta*) *salvini* on 2 September (one), with a few probables in September–October (*JGr*) and one off the west coast in late May (*BDy*); **Chatham Albatross** *T.* (*cauta*) *eremita* on 10 July (*BW*), the third record for southern Africa; **Grey-headed Albatross** *T. chrysostoma* on 10 July and 5, 6 and 21 August (all singles; *JGr, RW*, per *TH*). Other seabirds included **Flesh-footed Shearwater** *Puffinus carneipes* on 14 February (*RW*), 11 March and 14 and 21 October (*JGr*), and a **South Polar Skua** *Catharacta maccormicki* on 8 July (*RW*).

A **White-headed Petrel** *Pterodroma lessonii* was observed over the Agulhas Banks on 9 May (*PR*); this is a very rare species in southern African waters, with only a few con-



Grey-headed Albatross / Albatros à tête grise *Thalassarche chrysostoma*, *c.*25 nautical miles south-west of Cape Point, South Africa, 5 August 2006 (Trevor Hardaker)

firmed sightings. A **Little Shearwater** *Puffinus assimilis* was spotted from Cape Point on 12 August (*BR*). A **Red-footed Booby** *Sula sula* was found dead in Durban Bay, KwaZulu-Natal, on 26 April (*DA*) and one was seen *c.*35 nautical miles off Durban on 2 July (*MG*). Two **Brown Boobies** *S. leucogaster* were offshore of Gariep (Orange) River mouth, Northern Cape, on 2 July (*PS*), and one was near Umhlanga, KwaZulu-Natal, on 22 July (*AN*). Also in KwaZulu-Natal, single **Greater Frigatebirds** *Fregata minor* were seen at Richards Bay on 5 January (*ES*) and at Kosi Bay on 11 January (*LO*). A **Red-tailed Tropicbird** *Phaethon rubricauda* was at Plettenberg Bay Lagoon, Western Cape, on 8 July (*MCh*).

Two **Slaty Egrets** *Egretta vinaceigula* were present at Marievale Bird Sanctuary, Gauteng, from 2 January until at least late February (*DH*); an immature found near Nieuwoudtville, Northern Cape, on 17 September (*MM*), was still there a week later. South Africa's long-staying **Little Blue Heron** *E. caerulea* was still present at the Olifants River mouth at Papendorp, Western Cape, in September (per *TH*). The second **Western Reef Heron** *E. gularis* for southern Africa stayed at the Rondebult Bird Sanctuary, Gauteng, from 15 April (*CvR*) until at least the end of the month (Fig. 9); it was of the eastern race *schistacea*, whereas the first record, from Cape Town, was of the nominate race.

A juvenile **Egyptian Vulture** *Neophron percnopterus* was observed in the Magaliesberg, Gauteng, on 22 January (*GV & NS*) and an adult near Idutywa in the Transkei on 4 February; the latter record suggests the presence of a relict population there (*DAt*). **Western Marsh Harriers** *Circus aeruginosus* were reported from Marievale Bird Sanctuary, Gauteng, from 2 January until late February (two; *DH*), with one still there on 1 March (*CP*); from Krugerdrift Dam near Bloemfontein, Free State, on 3–8 January (*RN*); from Wakkerstroom, Mpumalanga, on 29 January (*HB*) and 8 March (*CS*); and from Zeekoeivlei, Memel, Free State, on 19 November (per *TH*).

A **Eurasian Oystercatcher** *Haematopus ostralegus* remained at St Lucia, KwaZulu-Natal, from 22 January (*RKo*) until at least 14 April; another was at Gamtoos River mouth, Eastern Cape, on 4 March (*PW*). An **American Golden Plover** *Pluvialis dominica* was at Velddrif, Western Cape, on 28 October (*JS*). Single **Pacific Golden Plovers** *P. fulva* were recorded at Krugerdrift Dam, Free State, on 22 January (*HK*; still there on 25th); at Richards Bay, KwaZulu-Natal, on 4 February (*ASu*; still there on 20 March); at De Mond Nature Reserve, Western Cape, on 10 February (*PC*; still there in late February); with another at the same locality on 28 October (*TH*; still there on 12 November). A **White-rumped Sandpiper** *Calidris fuscicollis* remained at Velddrif, Western Cape, from 12 November until at least 21st (per *TH*). **Pectoral Sandpipers** *C. melanotos* were found at Moordrift Dam, Limpopo, on 22 January (two; *KvD*); at Woodbourne Pan, Knysna, on 13 March (*MK*; last reported on 20th); and near De Mond Nature Reserve, Western Cape, on 26 October (*KO*; until at least early November). A **Broad-billed Sandpiper** *Limicola falcinellus* found at Richards Bay, KwaZulu-Natal, on 25 February (*ASu*) was still there on 20 March. Records of **Black-tailed Godwits** *Limosa limosa* include the following: four still present at Marievale Bird Sanctuary, Gauteng, on 1 January (*SM*) until at least 1 May; with one also there on 21 September (*DD*); 11 at Spitskop Dam, north of Kimberley, Northern Cape, on 4 January (*DK*; last reported on 31st); two at Sabi Sands Game Reserve on 15 January (*WBo*); two at Strandfontein sewage works, Western Cape, on 3 February (*JN*); one at Mavella Pan, Mpumalanga, on 4 February (*DO*); one in West Coast National Park, Western Cape, on 7 February (*PC*); and one at Velddrif on 2 September (*DC & IC*). **Common Redshanks** *Tringa totanus* were observed in the Western Cape at Geelbek on 6 January (two; *JdT*), last reported on 24 February, and 2 September (one; *MMo*), and at Velddrif on 17 January (one; *BV*), with two there from 15 June (*HK*) until at least 28 June, and another single on 28 October (*JS*); and in KwaZulu-Natal at Richards Bay on 25 February (*ASu*; still there on 20 March). Two **Green Sandpipers** *T. ochropus* were at Darvill Bird Sanctuary, Kwazulu-Natal, on 7 January (*JA*); one was at Maloto, Gauteng, on 11–16 January (*EM*); one at Sunninghill, Gauteng, on 12 January (*JNi*); one at Wolfhuiskraal, north of Pretoria, on 15 January (*PP*); and one at Marievale Bird Sanctuary, Gauteng, on 30 March (*DD*). **Red-necked Phalarope** *Phalaropus lobatus* records include one still present at Stiltbaai sewage works on 3 January (*RV*) and last seen there on 21st; seven at Velddrif, Western Cape, on 9 January (*AB & DR*), with one there on 21 October (*JK*; present until at least the end of the month); one at Strandfontein on 8 February (*MCa*), still present at the end of April; one in Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park on 16 February (*NP & JS*); five at Velddrif on 13 November (*TH*), with two still there on 19th. Single **Red Phalaropes** *P. fulicarius* were at Spitskop Dam, north of Kimberley, on 31 January (*MA*), at Darvill Bird Sanctuary, KwaZulu-Natal, on 1 February (*BS & NBa*) and at Kgaswane Mountain Reserve, North West province, on 26 February (*PPh*).

Five or six **Franklin's Gulls** *Larus pipixcan* were found: one at Strandfontein sewage works, Western Cape, on 14 January (*ICo*), subsequently assumed to be two birds, with one last reported on 24 April; one at Lambert's Bay, Western Cape, on 29 January (*CD*); one along the Liesbeek River in Mowbray, Cape Town, on 21 March (*IG*); one at Mseni Lodge in Sodwana, Kwazulu-Natal, on 18–19 May (per *TH*; perhaps the same individual that was seen on 25 May in Maputo Elephant Reserve, Mozambique); and one at Umdloti Lagoon, Durban, on 5–13 July (*AM*). Records of **Common Black-headed Gulls** *L. ridibundus*

include one at Durban Bay on 5 January (*GA*) and 14 October (*OF*; until at least 29th), one at the Umgeni River mouth, Durban, on 11 May (*AK*), one at Welkom, Free State, on 22 August (*BC*; last reported on 17 September), one at Lambert's Bay, Western Cape, on 10 September (per *TH*), one in the Port Elizabeth area, Eastern Cape, on 28 September (*PW*; still present in late October), and two off Hermanus, Western Cape, on 20 November (per *TH*). A **Lesser Black-backed Gull** *L. fuscus* was seen at Oranjeville on the Vaal Dam on 20 March (*RMo*). A **Heuglin's Gull** *L. heuglini* in Durban harbour on 30 June (*AB & DR*) and present until at least 29 July may well be the 2005 individual.

The record of a **Gull-billed Tern** *Sterna nilotica* in West Coast National Park, Western Cape, on 21 January is apparently the 23rd for Southern Africa (*PR*); another was found at Kromme River mouth, St Francis Bay, Eastern Cape, on 20 September (*GDa*), where it remained until at least 26th. An exhausted **Sooty Tern** *S. fuscata* was found beside a road in Kruger National Park on 5 January (*WvdH*) and another at Mtunzini, KwaZulu-Natal, on 4 October (*VM*). A **Bridled Tern** *S. anaethetus* was observed at Lambert's Bay, Western Cape, on 17 January (*BV*) and another at Sundays River mouth, Eastern Cape, on 2 February (*PW*). The regularly returning individual at Cape Recife, Port Elizabeth, Eastern Cape, was back on 25 March (*CC*); it was seen again on 4 June (*BDy*) and remained until at least 4 July. Africa's first **Elegant Tern** *S. elegans* was discovered at Strandfontein sewage works, Western Cape, on 18 January (*CD*) and last seen on 18 February (Fig. 5). Towards the end of its stay, a second bird presumed to be another Elegant Tern was found (per *TH*).

At Phinda Private Game Reserve, KwaZulu-Natal, a **Madagascar Cuckoo** *Cuculus rochii* stayed from 5 February (*DDe*) until at least 15th; what was assumed to be the same bird returned in early November (per *TH*). Southern Africa's eighth **White-throated Bee-eater** *Merops albicollis* was discovered in the East London area, Eastern Cape, on 25 September (per *TH*). **Grey Wagtails** *Motacilla cinerea* were found at Hogsback, Eastern Cape, on 21 January (*MT*), at Constantia, Cape Town, on 20 May (*MH*; still there on 6 June) and at Strandfontein, Western Cape, on 16 September (*PB*). A male **Irania** *Irania gutturalis* photographed near Williston, Northern Cape, on 15 July (Fig. 8), was the first for South Africa and the first record south of the species' East African wintering grounds; despite intensive searching the bird could not be relocated in the next few days (per *TH*).

Tunisia

On 10 March 2006, 13 **Common Scoters** *Melanitta nigra* (a male, a female and 11 immatures/females) were caught in fishing nets in the Gulf of Tunis off Ezzahra (Fig. 10). The species winters along the Atlantic coast of North Africa but is accidental in Tunisia: there is only one previous definite record for the country, a male at Monastir in January 1976 (*HA*).

Uganda

Records from January–September 2006 include the following. At Lake Mburo National Park (=NP), a **White-backed Night Heron** *Gorsachius leuconotus* was seen on 4 February (*MMa*) and two **Madagascar Squacco Herons** *Ardeola idae* on 29 July (*ABy*). A **Verreaux's Eagle** *Aquila verreauxii* flew over Kitintale on 23 June; this is a new record for the Kampala area (*DP*). One in Queen Elizabeth NP on 4 August was new for the park, as was a **Swallow-tailed Kite** *Chelictinia riocourii* in Murchison Falls NP on 12 August (*HBy*).

Although **Grey Crowned Crane** *Balearica regulorum* appears to be in serious decline, flocks are still relatively common outside the breeding season, e.g. 60 *c.*15 km west of Mbarara on 10 July (*DP*); 83, a high number for the Albertine Rift, at Kashaka, Lake George, on 28 July (*ABy*), and 171 at the Kaku swamp, Masaka District, on 29 July (*ABy*); the latter site holds the national record, of 650, in 2003. A pair of **White-headed** (=White-crowned) **Lapwings** *Vanellus albiceps* with chicks was observed at Murchison Falls NP on 6 July (*HBy*); the first and second records for Uganda have recently been accepted, both from Murchison: a single in July 2003 and a pair in January 2004 (*JL*). An adult **Common Sandpiper** *Actitis hypoleucos* with three young was seen at Lutembe on 22 July (*ABy*); there is a documented breeding record from Buddu, near Masaka, involving an incubating bird photographed in 1911. **Grey-headed Gulls** *Larus cirrocephalus* continue to increase on the Musambwa Islands, where they breed; over 51,000 were recorded there on 13 July (*ABy & RK*). A remarkable 1,363 **Pied Kingfishers** *Ceryle rudis* were counted on the Kazinga Channel on 26 July (*ABy*), a record number for that site. On 30 January there was a **Crested Barbet** *Trachyphonus vaillantii* near Rwonyo, Lake Mburo NP (*MMa*).

A pair of **African Green Broadbills** *Pseudocalyptomena graueri* was seen nest building in Bwindi Impenetrable NP on 22 May (*AGo*). In early August, two nests had chicks, whilst a third pair was feeding a fledgling (*HBy*). Four **White-breasted Cuckoo-shrikes** *Coracina pectoralis* seen in Lake Mburo NP on 6 February were new to the park and indeed to southern Uganda (*MMa*).

White-headed Lapwing / Vanneau à tête blanche *Vanellus albiceps* (Pete Leonard)

In Semliki NP, a **Forest Scrub Robin** *Cercotrichas leucosticta* was observed on 25 August and a **Grey Ground Thrush** *Zoothera princei* on 28 August (*DHo*). A **Bocage's Bush Shrike** *Malaconotus bocagei* was seen south of Mabira Forest in August; though described as 'fairly common' in *The Bird Atlas of Uganda* (Carswell *et al.* 2005), it is now rarely recorded (*DN, PA & RK*). On 7 August, four tiny birds near Sambiya River Lodge in Murchison Falls NP were identified as **Yellow Penduline Tits** *Anthoscopus parvulus* (*PM*); this would be a new species for Uganda and East Africa, if accepted. A pair of **Golden-naped Weavers** *Ploceus aureonucha* was observed in Semliki NP on 1 August; this is the first record for Uganda and also the first anywhere since 1986, when it was seen in the Ituri Forest, Kivu Province, DR Congo (*MW*). **Orange-cheeked Waxbills** *Estrilda melpoda* were seen in Semliki NP in August (*DHo*) and September (*RM, DJ & HS*); the species was only discovered in Uganda, at this site, in 2003. In Kidepo NP a male **Steel-blue Whydah** *Vidua hypocherina* in full breeding plumage was seen on 1 September (*DHo*).

Zambia

Following at least four separate records in Livingstone and Choma in 2004–06, **Speckled Pigeon** *Columba guinea* has been admitted to the Zambian list, which rises to 753 species (*PD & SN* per *PL*).

Zimbabwe

Two records included in a previous Recent Reports (*Bull. ABC* 13: 230) require correction. The large **Amur Falcon** *Falco amurensis* roost of 25,000–30,000 birds was not at Marondera but at Tafara Township, north-east Harare. The 28 **Blue Swallows** *Hirundo atrocaerulea* reportedly seen at Harare were in fact observed '4 km up the Troutbeck Road from the Nyanga Road', this being in the Eastern Highlands, where expected (*IR*).

A **Western Marsh Harrier** *Circus aeruginosus* was reported from Marlborough Vlei on 11 January (*NdP & GD*). A **Grey Wagtail** *Motacilla cinerea* remained in the Vumba from 5 February until at least 3 March (*GD*). Single **Eurasian Reed Warblers** *Acrocephalus scirpaceus* were mist-netted at Marlborough Vlei on 11 January (*NdP & GD*) and on the Uzumbe River floodplain on 29 January (*APi*).

Records were collated by Ron Demey from contributions supplied by David Allen (DA), Garth Alston (GA), Jon Anderson (JA), Mark Anderson (MA), Roy Armstrong (RA), Phil Atkinson (PA), David Attenborough (DAt), Hichem Azafzaf (HA), Noray Babcock (NBa), Clive Barlow (CB), Hemme Batjes (HB), Mark Beevers (MB), Andre Bernon (AB), Mark Boorman (MBo), Nik Borrow / Birdquest (NB), Sander Bot (SB), André Botha (ABo), Willem Botha (WBo), John Bradshaw (JB), Chris Brewster (CBr), Joost Brouwer (JBr), Peter Brunwin (PB), Achilles Byaruhanga (ABy), Herbert Byaruhanga (HBy), John Caddick (JC), Morné Carstens (MCa), Malcolm Charles (MCh), Chris Cheetham (CC), Mark Coetzee (MC), Philip Coetzee (PC), Brian Colahan (BC), Duncan Cook (DC), Ines Cook (IC), Ian Cowgill (ICo), Mohamed Balla Moussa Condé (MCo), P. Danckwerts (PD), Ian Davidson (ID), Gregg Darling (GDa), Brad Dawe (BD), Dave Deighton (DD), Daryl Dell (DDe), Eckart Demasius (ED), Cliff Dorse (CD), Gary Douglas (GD), Bruce Dyer (BDy), Koos van Dyk (KvD), Craig Evenhouse (CE), Oliver Fellingham (OF), Erik Forsyth / Rockjumper Birding Tours (EF), Arthur Geilvoet (AG), Olivier Girard (OG), John Glenninding (JG), Andrew Goodwin (AGo), Meidad Goren (MG), John Graham (JGr), Ian Grant (IG), Anne Gray (AGr), Robin Gray (RG), Adrian Haagner (AH), Trevor Hardaker (TH), Willie van den Heever (WvdH), Dave Hibbard (DH), David Hoddinott / Rockjumper Birding Tours (DHo), Marlene Hofmeyr (MH), Clive Hopcroft (CH), Colin Jackson (CJ), Dennis Jeurissen (DJ), Chege wa Kariuki (CwK), Raymond Katebaka (RK), Margaret Kelly (MK), Laurent Kergoat (LK), Allan Kirby (AK), Dawie Kleynhans (DK), Herman Kleynhans (HK), Rynhard Kok (RKo), Jan Kotze (JK), Pete Leonard (PL), Jeremy Lindsell (JL), Stan Madden (SM), Etienne Marais (EM), Moses Matsiku (MMa), Alistair McInnes (AM), Ruben Mersch (RM), Vaughan Meyrick (VM), Dusty Millar (DM), Michael Mills / Birding Africa (MM), Michiel Moll (MMo), Richard Montinaro (RMo), Pete Morris (PM), Dianah Nalwanga (DN), Justin Nicolau (JNi), Johan Niewoudt (JN), S. Norman (SN), A.Norval (AN), Rick Nuttall (RN), Larry O'Dell (LO), Keith Offord (KO), Derick Oosthuizen (DO), Janne Ouwehand (JO), Phil Penlinton (PP), Phineas Phago (PPh), Andrew Pickles (APi), André Pienaar (AP), Derek Pomeroy (DP), Clyde Porter (CP), Bruno Portier (BP), Naas du Preez (NdP), Nicolas Proust (NP), Hugo Rainey (HR), Ian Riddell (IR), Dominic Rollinson (DR), Chris van Rooyen (CvR), Barrie Rose (BR), Kev Roy (KR), Peter Ryan (PR), Svenja Sammler (SS), Joan Schrauwen (JS), Vincent Schricke (VS), David Shackelford (DS), Ian Sinclair (IS), Adrian Skerrett (AS), Neil Smith (NS), Chris Spengler (CS), Jenny Snyman (RS), Frank Steinbeimer (FS), Peter Steyn (PS), Errard Sullivan (ES), Andrew Sutherland (ASu), Barry Swaddle (BS), Henk Swinkels (HS), Martin Taylor (MT), Jan du Toit (JdT), Patrick Triplet (PT), Bertrand Trolliet (BT), Steph Tyler (ST), Brian Vanderwalt (BV), Filip Verbelen (FV), Gerhard Verdoorn (GV), Reinderd Visser (RV), Nigel Voaden (NV), James Wakelin (JW), Ross Wanless (RW), Barry Watkins (BW), Keith Wearne (KW), Phil Whittington (PW), Malcolm Wilson (MW), Edwin Winkel (EW) and from Alula, Africa—Birds & Birding, Birding World, Dutch Birding, *capebirdnet, SARareBirdAlert and www.zestforbirds.co.za.*

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List of Bird Recorders and Checklist Compilers

Compiled by Keith Betton

Liste des personnes ressources et compilateurs de check-listes. La liste présentée ci-après est mise à la disposition des lecteurs afin de les inciter à envoyer leurs observations ou rapports de voyages ornithologiques de la région couverte par l'ABC (voir *Bull. ABC* 12: 2) aux personnes indiquées.

This list was last published in 2004 (*Bull. ABC* 11: 80–83), since when details have changed significantly. The purpose of this compilation is to update ABC members on relevant bird recorders and checklist compilers for all of the countries covered within the ABC region (see *Bull. ABC* 1: 12). 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 observer's notebooks.

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Reviews

Field Guide to the Birds of Western Africa

Nik Borrow & Ron Demey, 2004. London, UK: Christopher Helm. 512 pp, 148 colour plates, c.1,300 maps. Paperback. ISBN 0713666927. UK£29.99.

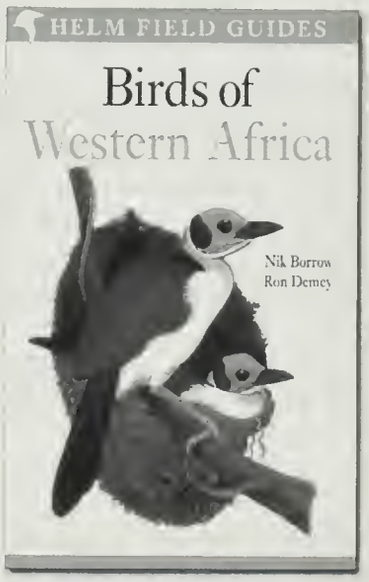
This recently published field guide complements the original well-received *Birds of Western Africa* (Borrow & Demey 2001; see review *Bull. ABC* 10: 38–39). With almost 150 plates and concise authoritative text on facing pages, it offers a compact, lightweight field reference to all 1,304 bird species, including vagrants and visitors, recorded from Mauritania and Senegal east to Chad and the Central African Republic, and south to Congo. It is the first field guide to cover this region both exclusively and comprehensively, thus enabling birders to identify all species found in any of the 23 countries covered.

The guide is much-needed and largely follows the order of the original, larger book. Initially, it introduces the reader to the area covered, updates nomenclature and provides a user's guide to the plate captions, plates and maps. There follow sections on climate, topography and the main habitats, restricted-range species and Endemic Bird Areas. Updated taxonomy with definitions, organisations, bird topography, a glossary and an explanation of abbreviations and symbols are all presented clearly and precisely, making the introduction as user-friendly as expected from these authors and publishing house.

There are now 148 plates, one more than in the original tome. Most plates have been reproduced unchanged, though *c.*15 appear to have been repainted. Personally, I doubted that Nik Borrow's original bulbul plates, for example, could be faulted. He has, however, proved me wrong with improved ones. I was pleased to see a colour plate of hornbills in flight, which many users will greatly appreciate. What lets this guide down slightly is the reproduction, unlike the parent hardback which rather faithfully reproduced his fine plates. Having seen Nik's vibrant originals, I was disappointed to note that the smaller format softback not only loses out slightly in the reduction process, but also swings quite dramatically with the colour reproduction. I find the reds and greens very 'punchy' compared to the original. The cisticolas, for example, are rather orange and lose the tonal values of Nik's original work, a rather important point in field identification of these tricky species, and some of his painstaking work has therefore been lost. Some plates have suffered through darkening during reproduction at a smaller scale, and appear rather dingy. These, however, are not necessarily those of the originals, which had tinted backgrounds. That said birders using this guide will not lose out in the field, as the rather poor reproduction will, in some circumstances at least, only enhance enjoyment of the real thing. I still 'hold my hat up' to Nik Borrow; this is a fantastic achievement let down only by an inconsistent printing.

Facing each plate, the accompanying text is very brief but authoritative. The short descriptions, covering adult male, female and juvenile plumages plus any racial variation, habitat requirements and vocals, are all well transcribed. Reference to Claude Chappuis' (2000) outstanding collection of 15 CDs of *African Bird Sounds* are presented within square brackets with both CD and track number.

I like the use of colour banding at the head of each page to delineate different groups. After a few days in



the field, I am sure this feature will become particularly useful, as familiarity will speed finding different families, thus quickening the identification process. The field guide also has an updated colour distribution map for each species, conveniently placed on interleaved pages between the colour plates. This may not be to everyone's liking, but is perhaps the best option considering just how much territory and bird species are covered in a relatively small amount of space. Birders should not be too disgruntled by having to turn the page just to see whether or not the species occurs in a given region. It is far better than having the maps at the back of the book, which instead closes with an updated reference list.

With more birders now visiting western Africa and, finally, able to use a book worthy of the title 'field guide', I imagine future editions will contain even more species as many exciting discoveries surely await in this region. We have waited some considerable time for a modern and usable field guide to West African birds. Nik Borrow and Ron Demey clearly have extensive field experience over many years in the region. Their knowledge and expertise shines

through in this excellent field guide to one of the world's most exciting birding regions, and both are to be congratulated for completing the task admirably. Now, I only wish I hadn't split my original hardback in half, as clearly I did not need to!

Mark Andrews

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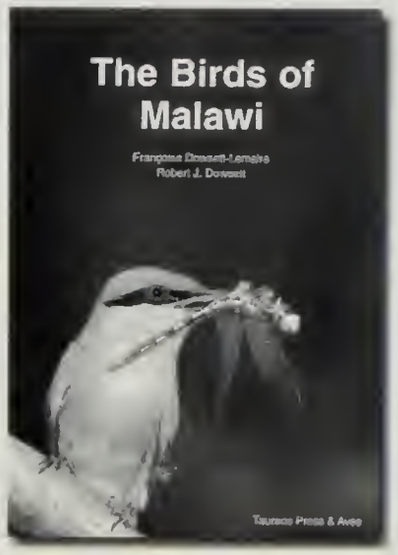
The Birds of Malawi. An Atlas and Handbook

F. Dowsett-Lemaire & R. J. Dowsett, 2006. Liège: Tauraco Press and Aves. 556 pp, 16 colour plates, 625 maps. Softback. ISBN 2-87225-004-2. UK£25. Available from Natural History Book Service Ltd, 2–3 Wills Road, Totnes, Devon, TQ9 5XN, UK, www.nhbs.com

A Contribution to the Ornithology of Malawi. Tauraco Research Report No. 8

F. Dowsett-Lemaire, 2006. Liège: Tauraco Press. 121 pp. Softback. ISBN 2-87225-003-4. UK£10.

The blurb on the back cover of *The Birds of Malawi* ably summarises the plain facts of this astonishing book; it presents '…detailed accounts of the 650 species known [from the country]. For each there are sections on distribution, ecology, status and movements, conservation, breeding season (where applicable) and taxonomy, the whole based on extensive fieldwork supported by some 700 published references. There are clear atlas maps for all but vagrants, as well as details of ringing recoveries and a gazetteer of 400 localities. In 80 pages, the introductory chapters review such topics as vegetation and major bird habitats, biogeography, conservation and a history of the



ornithological exploration in Malawi.' As such therefore the book effectively covers a similar range of topics to the British Ornithologists' Union's Checklist series, combined with the atlas mapping element of, for example, Ash & Miskell (1998) and Carswell *et al.* (2005), but includes significantly more besides.

Whilst there have been two previous national avifaunas published for Malaŵi (Belcher 1930, Benson & Benson 1977), upon which the authors draw heavily, the amount of new information on Malaŵi's birds that has been gained in the last 30 years is remarkable. Much of this has been generated by the authors themselves, partly, but by no means solely, deriving from the atlas project they initiated in the early 1980s while resident in the country and which continued after their departure. They briefly describe its history in the introductory section, acknowledging in particular the role played by Bob Medland in coordinating the project in 1987–94. The data generated by this project form the basis of the maps and parts of the accompanying species accounts published here. Not the least astonishing aspect of this book is how much information has been generated by a very few dedicated contributors—insignificant in number compared with those involved in atlas projects in western Europe, North America or even South Africa.

One innovative and pleasing aspect of this book is the effort made to place Malaŵi's avifauna in continental context. Thus, the chapter on vegetation and bird habitats shows how the vegetation types of the country relate to the chorological classification of the vegetation of Africa of White (1983), which is based upon shared patterns of distribution shown by plant species (as opposed to families or genera), as well as using his definitions for particular vegetation types. Interspersed within this chapter are 16 pages of colour photos of habitats as well as of representative or key bird species; the captions to these photos however lack data as to when, and in the case of the birds, where the photos were taken.

The following chapter on biogeography pursues this contextual approach and examines Malaŵi's avifauna in the context of the three phytochoria, or 'biomes', represented in the country, the names of which simplify to the Zambezian, the Afromontane and the Eastern (forest) regions. The high floristic distinctiveness of these regions is mirrored by the animals that inhabit them, to which many are therefore endemic or near-endemic. Lists of the bird species largely or wholly confined to particular biomes have been prepared and form the basis of one means of identifying Important Bird Areas, BirdLife International's site conservation programme (Fishpool & Evans 2001). Here, the authors present an analysis and discussion of those elements of the Malaŵian (and neighbouring Zambian) avifaunas whose distributions are restricted to each of these three biomes.

Some 20 pages of the introduction are given over to a discussion of the conservation issues facing Malaŵi's habitats and birds, with a focus on the country's protected area system. Summary details are given for each of the 46 national parks, wildlife and forest reserves, including an assessment of the threats facing each. The overall message here is not encouraging…

Each species account and map occupies about half a page and are models of economy, succinctly packing in an enormous amount of infor-

mation. The two-colour maps show presence / absence data for each species in 175 15 min × 15 min squares, printed over a background map of the country which uses white and two tints of grey to show three altitude ranges, whilst filled blue squares are usually used to indicate species' occurrence. Black or partial blue filling of the squares is also used on some maps to show unusual records or, for example, breeding sites of colonial species. Each map is printed with numbered gridlines at one-degree intervals and the total number of squares is given from which the species has been recorded. The 'Distribution' section of the accompanying text provides wider biogeographical information as well as summary details of within-country distribution, to complement and help interpret the map. An indication of abundance is also given here (although, oddly, the introductory explanation of the abundance scale does not appear in the same place as that of the distribution section itself).

The section headed 'Ecology' includes information on habitat, food and feeding behaviour and nesting sites, whilst that on 'Status' here means whether the species is resident or not; if migrant, what type of movements are undertaken and indications of their extent and timings. Also included are indicative numbers for congregatory and colonial species as well ringing recovery data, together with estimates of longevity and site fidelity. There is a separate section headed 'Conservation' which, along with the latest edition of 'Roberts' (Hockey *et al.* 2005) is, I think, the first time that explicit consideration of the conservation status of each species has been made in a work such as this in Africa. The authors give their assessment of the effects of habitat degradation and other threats on each species, and point out, as appropriate, sites where particular species are well protected as well as indicating those species profiting from anthropogenic changes to the environment. All of which strikes me as both a welcome, indeed significant, innovation and a depressing sign of the times. Under 'Breeding' appears information on season, expressed as the number of clutches started in each month, along with data on clutch and brood size, moult and, where appropriate, the months during which males are in breeding dress. The 'Taxonomy' section presents information on the subspecific identity or, as necessary, identities, represented in Malaŵi. In cases where more than one race occurs, their respective ranges in the country are outlined and, in some instances, but not all, these are distinguished on the accompanying map. Throughout the species accounts, key facts are referenced in the text using superscripted numerals, with the references given at the end of each account.

There are two appendices, the first detailing ringing recoveries in Malaŵi of 20 species (with maps provided for eight), whilst the second is an extensive gazetteer of localities which, in a further welcome addition, includes altitudes or altitudinal ranges for all. What a sensible idea!

Overall, therefore, the subtitle of the book—'an atlas and handbook'—is fully justified. This book exudes authority, is essential for anyone with a serious interest in the birds of Malaŵi and is almost so for those whose main focus is elsewhere the sub-region. It is likely to remain the standard work on Malaŵi's birds for years to come.

Less essential perhaps but valuable nonetheless, *A Contribution to the Ornithology of Malawi. Tauraco Research Report No. 8* contains two papers, of which one is entitled 'Notes supplementary to *The Birds of Malawi* (2006)'. This gives, species by species, further details and sources of (often unpublished) records upon which the book draws but which were omitted from it 'in order to unclutter the presentation of the species accounts…' It is obviously a pity that this additional information could not have been included in the book and hence have it all in one place, but there is a lot of material here, amounting to 55 pages, so one can see why the decision was made to publish it elsewhere.

The other (64-page) paper, 'An annotated list and life history of the birds of Nyika National Park, Malawi-Zambia' is, in effect, *The Birds of Malawi* writ small. Thus, it contains an account of the avifauna of the 3,134 km^2 Nyika National Park in northern Malaŵi (as well as the 80 km^2 of the park located just across the border in Zambia). Short prefatory chapters are given on the history of exploration of the plateau, an ecological description, considerations of its biogeographical and conservation importance and of the threats to which it is subject, whilst the bulk of the paper is devoted to an account of each species recorded from the park. Unlike *The Birds of Malawi* however, there is only one map, of the park itself. On the other hand, the species accounts are often more discursive and diverting. It is hard, for example, to resist this from the entry for Cape Batis *Batis capensis*: 'The female and her mate (both colour-ringed) were in the same patch near the Zambian rest house during visits in 1975 and 1977. In Oct. 1979 the territory was found empty, but the female had moved to another patch (350 m distant) and was paired with a new mate. In early Nov. a subadult male appeared in the first (deserted) patch, upon which (no later than early Dec.) the old female left her new mate and returned to the Zambian side to pair with him: she then successfully raised two young.'

L. D. C. Fishpool

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Southern African Birdfinder

Callan Cohen, Claire Spottiswoode & Jonathan Rossouw, 2006. Cape Town: Struik. 455 pp, colour photographs, maps and pull-out map. Softback. ISBN 1-868-72-725-4. UK£19.99.

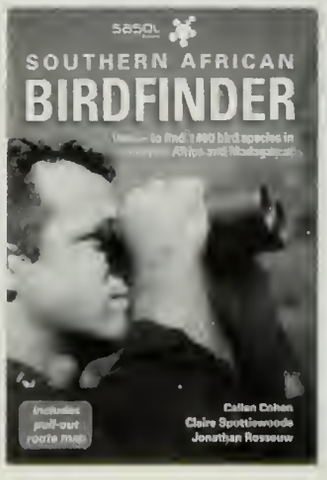
'Where to find 1400 bird species in southern Africa and Madagascar' is the tempting subtitle. In this book the traditional southern African borders have been extended, quite considerably, to include not only South Africa, Namibia, Botswana and Zimbabwe, but also Angola, Zambia, Malaŵi and all of Mozambique, and as an aside Madagascar too. The authors suggest describing the area covered by the book as the greater southern African region. To include Madagascar is perhaps extending the boundaries of this region too far, and the latter could probably be discussed more comprehensively in a separate work also covering all of the other Indian Ocean Islands.

Almost two-thirds of the book concentrates on Africa south of the Cunene and Zambezi rivers. The text leads one to more than 300 birding sites and describes in detail which bird species can be found at any given locality. Directions on how to get to each site are given as well as, in some cases, maps with markers indicating where one should spend some more time looking for a specific bird species. Chapters are divided into routes. In the introduction to each of these, the authors give a list of 'Top 10 birds' for which each route is particularly noted.

The remaining third of the book covers the less birded areas north of the Cunene and Zambezi. For these areas, the information provided is less detailed and far fewer sites are described. The least well-covered countries are Angola, a relatively new destination for adventurous birders following years of civil war, and Madagascar. For the latter the coverage is restricted mainly to the traditional sites. Admittedly, as it is mandatory in Madagascar's reserves and national parks to use a local guide, some of which are exceptionally skilled at finding the birds at their site, the value of the maps and textual information is relatively minor. However, there are many other sites in the country that are not well documented and where local guides are not skilled. Perhaps in future these are the areas this type of book should concentrate on.

The work concludes with a chapter on the region's 150 most sought-after birds followed by a separate chapter on Madagascar's top 20 birds. Here some extra guidance is provided and, in the authors' words, the list 'encapsulates a balance between elusiveness and desirability'. Each entry proffers information on the species' preferred habitat, habits and the best site to search for it. Two pages of useful contacts are given, including telephone numbers, e-mail addresses and websites.

A checklist of all species found in the region is provided at the back of the book. This list includes common and scientific names and is cross-referenced to the page number(s) where the species is mentioned in the text; it thus functions as an index. This is fine for the more experienced birder but more difficult for the novice, who may have difficulty in finding the relevant page number for a particular bird. There is also a general index to place names and a mammal index.



The overall quality of the text, photographs, maps and general information in this very attractively produced and practical book is excellent and usually exceptionally detailed. The proof-reading must have been very scrupulous, as I could only detect one minor error (there are two sites numbered 334 on the map) and one spelling inconsistency ('Cunene' river on the map, 'Kunene' in the text). In short: a very useful book for beginners and experienced birders alike. Browsing through it one feels like leaving immediately for the field to search for all those 1,400 bird species! Buy it and take it with you on your travels.

Ian Davidson

The Bird Atlas of Uganda

Margaret Carswell, Derek Pomeroy, Jack Reynolds & Herbert Tushabe, 2005. Oxford: British Ornithologists' Club & British Ornithologists' Union. 553 pp, many maps, figures and tables. ISBN 0-9522866-4-8. UK£55.

The bulk of this book consists of maps and brief species accounts for all of the 822 species for which five or more acceptable records exist for Uganda. The maps are primarily those for Quarter Square Degrees (83 + another 14 with minimal land in the country), although if more detailed coordinates are available for any given record it is placed as accurately as possible, often resulting in several dots in each square or one which spans more than one square.

The book, however, commences with some typical introductory matter, including: Environment of Uganda, which details landforms, climate, seasonality, major ecological zones and human impacts; a Brief History of Ornithology (and it is brief!); Overview of the Birds; Planning for Bird Conservation; and

an introduction to the atlas itself. There follow *c.*450 pages of species accounts, some appendices, including additions to the Uganda list since January 2000, a list of poorly documented species, species with published records that are considered erroneous, a gazetteer, and rounded off with a comprehensive list of *c.*600 references, which is a goldmine in itself.

Most of the introductory chapters provide essential background, but do not contain anything startling. However section 5 of Chapter 6 'Prediction of Habitat Suitability' is an interesting and innovative idea for atlases and despite some problems (fully admitted by the authors), for many species it works quite well and certainly helps to give a fuller picture of bird diversity than the actual records would do alone. From the start, the authors realised that coverage was likely to be patchy particularly in some parts of the country. The Kampala area and the national parks of the west are quite well covered but there are often squares in the rest of the country, especially in the north, with few records or even none. So, in order to give a fuller picture of a species' potential distribution rather than just relying on the actual records, the authors have determined where a species is likely to occur based on environmental variables. Full details are given of the process and its problems but very briefly, for those species with ten or more actual records (excluding waterbirds) they use rainfall, altitude, vegetation and habitat, and human-based environmental variables for the points at which the species was actually recorded, to derive models that predict in which other areas the species might occur but was not necessarily recorded. However, inevitably with a relatively simple model, some anomalies result. The most obvious are some of the montane forest species whose predicted range extends into lowland forests around Lake Victoria, and especially several species which are only known from Ruwenzori and the Albertine Rift are predicted to occur much further east, but there are quite

lot of others. Overall, this technique was used for nearly 500 of the 822 mapped.

The maps are based largely on the Ugandan National Biodiversity Data Bank (UNDB) and include data until the end of 1999. Pre-1990 records are distinguished separately and derive largely from the many and various literature sources. However, no special field work was conducted and nor it appears were the many visitors to the country in recent years targeted. This is a shame because many of the maps do seem rather sparser of definite records than they should and perhaps could be. However, all records shown are fully documented in the UNDB and it does serve to highlight that all visitors should send their observations to the National Data Bank. Some visitors and tour companies are excellent at this but many others do not bother (a comment which applies to many other countries too).

The species accounts accompanying the maps are usually brief (normally two per page). They consider taxonomy (the races which occur), habitat, and provenance of records (if this is important), whilst up to 50% of each account details any breeding records, though these are not distinguished on the maps. For many even quite common species there are none! As such, these accounts with the accompanying maps give an excellent summary of the current status of all birds in Uganda. For species with fewer than five records there is a brief account but no map, and the appendices detail new records and dismiss erroneous ones. The total species list at the end of 2004 was 1,014 with five more still under review.

This book will become the standard work on the birds of Uganda for many years and forms a major baseline. However, there are gaps and there are clearly some large areas of the country which are virtually unexplored. Hopefully, if the political situation improves, these will be visited more frequently. Tour companies should be encouraged to visit these less well-covered parts and, of course, always to submit their records. After all, how can we conserve many of these birds unless we know where they occur?

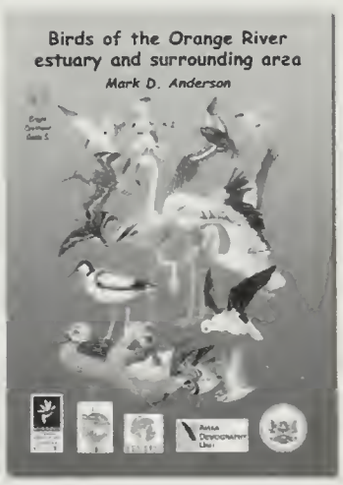
Peter Lack

Birds of the Orange River Estuary and surrounding area

M. D. Anderson, with illustrations by M. Newman, 2006. Bright Continent Guide 5. Kimberley: Department of Tourism, Environment and Conservation & Cape Town: Avian Demography Unit, University of Cape Town. 92 pp. ISBN 0-620-25207-3. Available (SA Rand 52 + p & p) from Netbooks (books@netbooks.co.za).

This short booklet is the fifth in an increasingly popular series covering various parts of southern Africa. Robben Island (Cape Province), Maputo Special Reserve (Mozambique), Malolotja Nature Reserve (Swaziland) and Niassa Reserve (Mozambique) have been the subjects of previous booklets.

The Orange River estuary is situated on the border between South Africa and Namibia and constitutes 2,000 ha of wetland, largely sur-



rounded by restricted-access diamond areas. However, access to the wetland is now easy from Alexander Bay. It is designated a Ramsar site because of its waterbird numbers (at times more than 20,000 of *c.*60 species) including some which are at least regionally rare and endangered. Total numbers have been declining (largely due to the decline of Cape Cormorant *Phalacrocorax capensis* and Common Tern *Sterna hirundo*), but some conservation efforts are now in place to rectify this. The area also attracts many vagrants, it being one of the few wetlands in the area.

There are *c.*30 pages detailing the site, its history as a bird site and its conservation, but the meat is the systematic list. This is as comprehensive as possible, detailing published (*c.*60 references in the list) and all unpublished records the author could locate. The list is also interspersed with attractive line drawings (*c.*1 per double-page spread).

Booklets such as this can only help to protect such sites and this one serves a very useful purpose in that regard. It is also essential for anyone visiting the area and the author welcomes records from visitors, especially breeding records.

Peter Lack

The Birds of São Tomé & Príncipe with Annobón: Islands of the Gulf of Guinea

Peter Jones & Alan Tye, 2006. Oxford: British Ornithologists' Union and British Ornithologists' Club. 172 pp, 16 colour plates (un-numbered). Hardback. ISBN 0-907446-27-2. UK£30.

The Gulf of Guinea islands (Bioko, Príncipe, São Tomé and Annobón) are a spectacular centre of endemism. Bioko was formerly connected to the mainland, but the others are oceanic and have always been isolated. Thus Bioko shares most of its biota with Cameroon and has only one endemic, whereas the three oceanic islands dealt with in detail in this book possess multiple endemics. Indeed, the level of avian endemism in relation to area of these islands is unparalleled globally. Despite covering barely 1,000 km^2, São Tomé, Príncipe and Annobón harbour 28 endemics. Each island is designated an independent Endemic Bird Area, and the southern forests of São Tomé, where 20 endemics occur, were classified as the second most important for bird conservation in a survey of 75 forests in Africa and Madagascar (Collar & Stuart 1988). The most common species are endemic; non-endemic landbirds within the mature forests are scarce. In comparison, the 13 main islands of the Galápagos, which cover *c.*8,000 km^2, are home to 22 endemic bird species, and the six main islands of the Hawaiian archipelago (*c.*16,000 km^2) possess 30 endemics (to which should be added 19 extinctions). However, whereas these two famous archipelagos have attracted much attention from ornithologists, the Gulf of Guinea has been surprisingly neglected.

Ornithological research only commenced in the mid-19th century and efforts have been irregular since. Most data are difficult to access, as they were published between 1850 and 1920 in French, German or Portuguese and are scattered through more obscure journals, unpublished reports and field notes. The only English-language synthesis, based on collections made in 1928–29, was produced by Amadon (1953) and is now well out of date. The first book on the birds, by de Naurois (1994), had a relatively small impact because it consisted of a rather thin summary of the extensive (and important) research conducted by the author himself in the 1960s and 1970s. It also contained some inaccuracies and did not include information on the rediscovery of four endemic species in 1990–91. This was followed by Christy & Clarke's (1998) attractive bird guide to the islands of São Tomé and Príncipe, which contains detailed species accounts but no references and does not cover Annobón.

As a result, this new checklist is the first comprehensive book on the avifauna of the islands, synthesising what appears to be everything that has ever been written (or said) on the birds of the Gulf of Guinea, as well as presenting it in an elegant, easy-to-read style. Following the BOU checklist series template, the book is divided into an introductory section and the species accounts. Colour photographs of the different islands and habitats are presented but, apart from the three species on the cover, the wealth of endemic birds is not illustrated. The reader can, however, find them in Christy & Clarke's guide (except the two Annobón endemics) or neatly placed together in three plates of *Birds of Western Africa* (Borrow & Demey 2001). Finally, there is a summary checklist (including the birds of Bioko), a gazetteer and an exhaustive reference list, which itself comprises an invaluable source for future researchers. Although complete, the final index does not distinguish the main entry for a species in the systematic list section from secondary references elsewhere in the list.

The introductory section will interest anyone curious about the natural history of Africa, as it does not focus exclusively on birds. Geological, human and ornithological histories are presented, together with the climate and the habitats of the islands. The detailed topographic maps should have been reproduced larger. The introduction also reviews endemism in plants and other animal groups, thereby highlighting the global importance of the Gulf of Guinea. Those parts dedicated to birds attempt to synthesise, rather then merely collate, many different sources of information. For example,

in the chapter 'Origins of the Avifauna', from the many often-discordant taxonomic assessments, the authors propose a set of hypotheses explaining the relationships of each of the endemics with mainland counterparts and the most probable colonisation routes. These will require testing using molecular techniques. In 'Seasonality of Breeding', graphs based on fragmentary and dispersed data depict laying dates. Although these graphs may depart from the true picture due to the scarcity of good-quality data, they do provide a baseline for future research. Throughout, the authors make good use of tables and figures to summarise information clearly and accessibly.

The species accounts are meticulous (references range from 1789 to personal communications from 2005), and an effort to resolve contradictory and erroneous information is present throughout. The authors include all local names found in the literature and collected by themselves or others on the islands, together with the Portuguese and Spanish names. Data for each island are presented under different headings for additional clarity. Out-of-date accounts or omissions can be found mainly amongst vagrants, because the final stages of the book's production coincided with an increase in bird-watching visits to the islands, and the authors chose to update only those records of greatest significance. In one sense, the more additions and corrections that now come forward, the more successful this book will have been.

The authors and BOU should be congratulated for having produced the first, well-researched reference book for an important but rather neglected region. It fills a gap in the ornithological literature and will fuel renewed interest in the islands. It can also serve as a much-needed tool to support efforts to conserve these fragile ecosystems; contrary to many oceanic islands, no extinctions have been documented and forest cover is still considerable, but this is set to change following the recent discovery of offshore oil reserves. As with other volumes in the BOU series, this one will certainly become a classic.

Martim Melo

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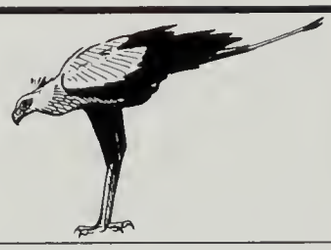
Letter to the Editor



On flocking behaviour of Black-necked Weaver *Ploceus nigricollis brachypterus* in South West Cameroon

Between 27 September and 4 October 2005, NH and LN had the opportunity to observe the birds in Limbe Botanical Gardens, the farmbush near Limbe and the slopes of Mt Cameroon between 850 and 1,950 m, with the assistance of local guide FN. Being familiar with the *nigricollis* and *melanoxanthus* races of Black-necked Weaver in Kenya, NH and LN were struggling to identify the race *brachypterus* present in Limbe Botanical Gardens—particularly the males. The confusion was compounded because we are used to observing this species in Kenya as singles or pairs.

In Limbe, however, we observed up to 100+ birds in single-species flocks, especially when coming into roost in the trees in the Botanical Garden in the evening. FN helped establish the identification, but he was also surprised by the flocking behaviour, as his experience was similar to ours of seeing only one or a pair. Whilst we did not come across such numbers elsewhere, we also saw flocks of ten or more in the farmbush near Limbe and on Mt Cameroon during the day.

Both Zimmerman *et al.* (1999) and Stevenson & Fanshawe (2002) describe this species as occurring singly or in pairs, which matches our East Africa experience. Borrow & Demey (2001) state 'In pairs . . . Not gregarious; often rather shy and skulking. Occasionally joins mixed-species flocks'. Fry & Keith (2004) describe the general habits as 'Not normally gregarious but, particularly in West Africa, small groups may forage together during dry season'. They also mention that the species 'roosts in groups in Ghana, Sierra Leone and Gabon'. Interestingly, we observed flocking behaviour during the rainy season (the dry season in this part of Cameroon being December–February). Fry & Keith (2004) give breeding periods for Cameroon as March–April and August–September.

It would appear that such flocking characteristic is either poorly documented, or is unusual or has been overlooked, which is why we have brought this observation to the attention of others. Should such behaviour prove commoner than realised hitherto, then it would seem that it is a feature of the race *brachypterus* rather than of the other two races.

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Editorial comment—Nik Borrow and Ron Demey have commented as follows. 'In western Africa Black-necked Weavers may indeed gather in sometimes large flocks, either for foraging or roosting. Flocks appear not uncommon in, e.g., The Gambia and Cameroon, but also in Gabon, so both the subspecies *brachypterus* and *nigricollis* exhibit this behaviour. In Côte d'Ivoire, however, RD never observed this behaviour during his many years of residence.'

Requests

Sightings of tagged vultures

A number of vultures in the Mara (Kenya) and Serengeti (Tanzania) areas have been fitted with coloured wing tags. If you see one, please note the number, date, time and location (by GPS or nearest landmark), and kindly e-mail the information to: tanzaniabirds@yahoogroups.com

Ugandan bird records still wanted

As many readers will be aware, the Uganda bird atlas was published last year (see review p. 112–113). A perusal of the maps therein reveals almost endless possibilities of adding to our knowledge. Observers therefore are encouraged to contribute interesting records from the country to one of the compilers of the atlas, Derek Pomeroy, e-mail: derek@imul.com (but not complete day lists or trip reports, which should be sent instead to the National Biodiversity Data Bank, e-mail: nbdb@ muienr.mak.ac.ug). Records of commoner species from areas generally unvisited by bird-watchers are also welcome. Please try and provide as precise locality data as possible, as well as the date, number of birds, and your name and address. New species continue to be added to the Ugandan list and most such firsts are reviewed by the East African Rarities committee and published in *Scopus*.

The identity of that fish...

The flying fish whose photograph appeared in *Bull. ABC* 13: 199 has been identified as *Cypselurus poecilopterus* by Jos Snoeks of the Royal Museum for Central Africa, Tervuren, Belgium (*per* Michel Louette).

Obituaries

Ken Newman
1924–2006

Well-known birdman, Ken Newman, died on 23 October 2006 at his home in Johannesburg. President of the South African Ornithological Society (SAOS) and subsequently of BirdLife South Africa for many years, he received several awards for his commitment to birding, including, in 2005, the prestigious WWF Lonmin Platinum Award for Conservation, and he was the first non-scientist to receive the Gill Memorial Medal for 'services to ornithology south of the Zambezi'. In May 2006 he received the BirdLife South Africa 'Owl Award'.

Ken was born near Basingstoke, England, on 30 May 1924. During World War Two he joined the Home Guard, but as soon as his age permitted, he joined the Royal Air Force. Grounded, however, because he suffered from asthma, he became exceptionally proficient at aircraft recognition. This stood him in good stead, when, later, he was to become inextricably involved in birds, bird-watching and the art of identification.

Post-war he attended a London polytechnic where he studied fine art. Following graduation he worked as a graphic artist for an advertising agency. Influenced by his geography teacher, who had passionately extolled the beauties of South Africa, Ken accepted a job in Durban in 1948. Deciding that life was unbearably slow, he moved to Johannesburg after six months and a few years later he married Elizabeth, a cartoonist at Johannesburg newspaper *The Star*. When Elizabeth died after 20 years together, Ursula, a friend of Elizabeth's, became Ken's second wife.

Before he arrived in South Africa there were no suitable bird field guides and Ken was dismayed at the lack of basic knowledge of birds in a country that was a veritable bird heaven. He decided to remedy this and brought out his first book, *Garden Birds of South Africa*, in 1953. For his next book, on roadside birds, he sought sponsorship from the Royal Automobile Club, but they declined with the response that drivers should be concentrating on the road, not birds. Not disillusioned, *Roadside Birds* was produced, with the foreword suggesting that the book was intended for passengers and not for drivers. He never looked back.

Ken Newman in August 2004, watching Marsh Owls *Asio capensis* hunting at Nylsvlei. (Warwick Tarboton)

In total Ken has 20 books, two videos and a DVD release to his name. His final book, *What Bird is That*, was published in 2003. *Birds of Southern Africa*, his famous field guide, was originally published in 1983. The ninth edition, which appeared in 2002, has sold more than 50,000 copies in English and Afrikaans.

Ken possessed a rare combination of talents, being an author, illustrator and photographer. His

passion for birds was unquestionable and his modesty and generosity legendary. When I once remarked, a few years ago, that I particularly liked one of his paintings on the wall of his home, he suggested I take it, because he had 'too few walls'. One story tells that he performed extremely well in art exams at school in Brighton—he recounted that he had a different teacher every year and had perfected the art of producing the same picture at each year's art exam.

In South Africa he became a highly skilled glider pilot. One day out of Baragwanath airfield, he unwittingly became caught in an updraft that took him to *c.*3,000 m, setting a world height record for gliders. At the time he had mixed feelings, his heart was in his throat, he was short of air but exhilarated by the vultures in the same thermal and all about him. He was passionate about raptors and intended to produce a raptor field guide. Perhaps one of his most painful memories was all the work he put into producing plates for such a book, only to have them stolen at Heathrow airport. These paintings have never surfaced since—perhaps whoever took them did not realise their worth, or now that he has gone maybe they will surface?

Ken leaves two daughters, Vanessa and Pamela, and a son, Nicolas; perhaps Vanessa, herself a graphic artist, will follow in his footsteps.

Ian Davidson

C. J. Skead
1912–2006

The name C. J. Skead may be unfamiliar to many ABC members, especially those less familiar with the ornithology of southern Africa. Inasmuch as this region derives much of its birdlife from tropical East Africa, however, Jack Skead's contribution to our knowledge of the life histories of African birds has been substantial. He was author of the long out-of-print books *The Canaries, Seedeaters and Buntings of Southern Africa* (1960) and *Sunbirds of Southern Africa* (1967), as well as numerous papers in *Ostrich* between 1946 and 1971. He gave freely of his knowledge to others working in the field of ornithology, so one finds his contributions frequently acknowledged in past standard reference books and monographs. An example of the latter is contained in Herbert Friedmann's *The Honeyguides* (1955). Friedmann was given such extensive field assistance by Skead (and friend Gordon Ranger) that he wrote ' . . . no words can adequately express the extent to which I, and all readers of this report, are indebted to them.'

Jack Skead lived in the Eastern Cape of South Africa all his life, briefly as a farmer, then as Director of the King William's Town Museum, before conducting ornithological research in the Eastern Cape for the Percy FitzPatrick Institute of African Ornithology at the University of Cape Town. This work culminated in the 100-page 'Ecology of birds in the Eastern Cape Province', published in 1967 as Supplement 7 of *Ostrich*. Following this he worked on the staff of the Kaffrarian (now Amathole) Museum until his retirement.

His interests ranged far beyond birds and he published books on a range of subjects, including a valuable gazetteer of place names in Eastern Cape, historical mammal distributions, offshore islands and many other topics. His meticulous research and publications led to several prestigious awards, including the Gill Memorial Medal for Ornithology in 1966, the Gold Medal of the Zoological Society of South Africa in 1977, and honorary doctorates in 1982 and 2004 from Rhodes University and University of Port Elizabeth respectively. His final magnum opus entitled *Life-history Notes on East Cape Bird Species: 1940–1990*, was printed in two volumes (totalling over 2,300 pages) in 1995 and 1997. He died in Port Elizabeth on 28 May 2006, a few weeks after his 94th birthday.

'Skeado', as he was affectionately known to his friends, was more than an ornithologist. He was an accomplished naturalist, one of the best of this increasingly rare breed, and his passing marks the end of an era of natural history exploration.

Terry Oatley

Notes for Contributors

The ABC welcomes original contributions on all aspects of the birds of Africa, here defined as the area covered by Collar, N.J. and Stuart, S.N. 1985. *Threatened Birds of Africa and Related Islands: The ICBP/IUCN Red Data Book*. Cambridge, UK: International Council for Bird Preservation, namely continental Africa, Indian Ocean islands west of 80°E, e.g. Madagascar, the Mascarene Islands and Socotra; Atlantic Ocean islands on or east of the mid-Atlantic ridge, e.g. the Tristan da Cunha group, the Azores and the Canaries.

Contributions will be accepted subject to editing and refereeing by independent reviewers, where appropriate. The Editorial Team will be happy to advise authors on the acceptability of material at draft stage if desired.

Submissions

Two hard (printed) copies should be sent unless submitting by e-mail (preferred) to the editor's address on the inside front cover. Typewritten manuscripts should be double-spaced, on one side of the paper only, with wide margins all round. All submissions are acknowledged.

Contributions are accepted in English or French: French summaries are required for all papers published in English, and vice versa. Those submitting papers should supply a summary for translation into English, or French, as appropriate.

If you submit your contribution on CD or floppy disk, please state computer (e.g. IBM compatible PC, Macintosh) and word-processing package (e.g. Word, WordPerfect) used.

When sending your contribution on disk, please do not key anything in ALL CAPS (i.e. with the CAPS LOCK key depressed) unless the combination always occurs in that form (e.g. 'USA'). Do not use the carriage return key at the end of lines, and do not right justify the margins. When formatting tables use one tab, and not spaces, between each column. Unless a sketch map is provided as part of the article, the names of places should follow those on standard or readily available maps (preferably a recent edition of *The Times Atlas of the World*).

Preferred names

Given the current instability over worldwide lists of bird names, authors are requested to follow those used in *The Birds of Africa* Vols. 1–7. The African Bird Club has recently published (www.africanbirdclub.org/resources/checklist.html) a checklist of birds in its region. This is based on *Birds of Africa* but incorporates more recent revisions where appropriate. It includes preferred scientific, English and French names, as well as races and alternatives used by publications widely used in Africa. For bird names this list should be used or at least the preferred name used there should be given as an alternative. For non-*Birds of Africa* species (e.g. from the Malagasy region) use Dowsett & Forbes-Watson (1993). Deviation from such works should be noted and the reasons given. The Editorial Team will keep abreast of changes in nomenclature and when an agreed list of African names is available, will consider switching to follow it.

Style

Authors are requested to follow conventions used in The *Bulletin of the African Bird Club* and to refer to a recent issue for guidance. A detailed style guide can be obtained, either electronically or as a hard copy, on request from the Managing Editor.

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

The Club aims to appoint many further ABC Representatives. If you are interested in supporting and promoting the Club in your region, have any queries, or require further information relating to the ABC Representatives scheme please do not hesitate to contact the Membership Secretary at the Club address, e-mail membership@africanbirdclub.org.

ABC is seeking Country Representatives in the following countries, principally within the Club's region: Algeria, Azores, Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Cape Verde Islands, Chad, Comoros & Mayotte, Côte d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, Gabon, Guinea-Bissau, Guinea Conakry, Kenya, Libya, Madeira, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Morocco, Mozambique, Niger, Réunion, Rodriguez, Rwanda, Senegal, Socotra, Somalia, St Helena, Sudan, Togo, Tristan da Cunha and USA.

Supported and Affiliated Membership

The Supporting Members scheme is a key part of the Club's strategy of encouraging the spread of knowledge and understanding of birds as widely as possible throughout Africa. The scheme enables Africans who would not otherwise have the resources to join, to become members of the Club. The scheme is funded by Supporting Members who pay a minimum of UK£30 to cover their own membership and the subscription of at least one African member. The money they contribute over and above their own subscription is placed in a special fund that is used to cover the membership expenses of African members whom they may have nominated, or who have been nominated by other Club members.

Although we have suggested a minimum of UK£30 to become a Supporting Member, any contribution is welcome. All members of the Club, even if they do not feel able to become Supporting Members themselves, are invited to nominate candidates for supported memberships. Candidates should be nationals of an African country, with a genuine interest in wild birds but without the resources to become members in their own right. Africans who think they may qualify are very welcome to put their own names forward, supported by a letter of recommendation from someone such as their employer, teacher or an officeholder in a local wildlife organisation.

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

ABC Information Service

ABC offers a service to help members with information requests. Perhaps you are planning a trip to Africa and need local advice, or maybe you are in search of an obscure fact about an African species. The Club does not guarantee to find all the answers but will try to help. The service is free to ABC members. Contact: 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. E-mail: info@africanbirdclub.org.

AfricanBirding e-mail discussion list

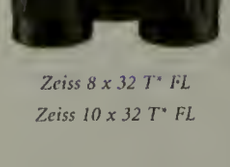
Launched, in October 2000, by the ABC and the Pan-African Ornithological Congress, AfricanBirding or AB, as it is known, has become a useful forum for those interested in African birds. To join the discussion, which averages 1–2 messages a day, send a blank e-mail to AfricanBirding-subscribe@yahoogroups.com.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

The Club also maintains a list of members' e-mail addresses. This list is confidential and used only for Club purposes, e.g. for informing members of upcoming events and news concerning the Club. It is not divulged to anybody outside the Club or used for commercial advertising. At present it includes addresses for about 50% of the membership. Please send any additions or amendments to the membership secretary: membership@africanbirdclub.org.

"Puffins can sometimes be incredibly confiding, coming to within a few metres of you if you sit quietly near their nesting colony. They are stunning birds, but to truly appreciate their colour and form, good binoculars are a must".

SIMON KING, Wildlife Film-Maker.

Shetland Islands, June 2006.



Zeiss 8 x 32 T FL*
Zeiss 10 x 32 T FL*

Simon is using Zeiss Victory FL 8 x 32 binoculars, with a close focus of 2 metres. With the best optical image quality of their class, minimum weight and optimum ergonomics and handling – these are the unbeatable benefits supplied by Victory FL Binoculars and their special objective lenses with fluoride glass (FL). For more information, please telephone: 01707 871 350 or visit www.zeiss.co.uk.

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