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Première observation au Sénégal du Martinet marbré *Tachymarptis aequatorialis*

Au cours d'un séjour au Parc National du Niokolo Koba en février 1986, je me suis rendu au Grand Mirador qui domine la fleuve Gambie entre Simentie et Wouring (13°05'W, 13°25'N). Là, mon attention fut attirée par un martinet de grande taille évoluant à hauteur du mirador d'un vol rapide. L'oiseau disparut puis, quelques instants plus tard, ce fut un groupe de neuf individus qui revint. Ceux-là restèrent une dizaine de minutes à voler dans les environs immédiats et la nature du site me permettait d'observer les oiseaux tantôt par-dessus tantôt par-dessous et parfois de bien près. D'un brun uniforme au-dessus, ces oiseaux avaient le ventre et la poitrine comme finement barrés; de plus, la queue était légèrement fourchue. Ces éléments me permirent de déterminer cette espèce comme le Martinet marbré *Tachymarptis aequatorialis*, espèce qui fréquente habituellement les régions montagneuses et qui, jusqu'à présent, n'était pas connue en Afrique de l'ouest, au nord de la Sierra Leone (Fry *et al.* 1988).

Toutefois, A. le Dru (com. pers.) observa ce martinet à plusieurs reprises en Guinée dans les arrondissements de Mamou, Kindia et Forécariah et jusqu'à 500 sujets en migration le 10 janvier 1988 dans la région de Fria. Ces différents sites guinéens sont séparés du nôtre par le massif du Fouta Djallon et distants d'environ 300 km.

Les jours suivants, et au cours des autres séjours effectués au Sénégal oriental, j'ai recherché en vain cette espèce dans des sites comparables ou *a priori* favorables.

Je remercie A. Le Dru pour la permission de reproduire ici ses notes.

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Réçu 23 janvier 1992

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Road-kills of three nightjar species near Niamey, Niger

Over a period of seven weeks in 1990, starting on 6 September, I found 63 vehicle-killed nightjars on a 20 km stretch of laterite road, leading from the checkpoint near Niamey south towards Say. The three species identified were Standard-wing Nightjar *Macrodipteryx longipennis*, Plain Nightjar *Caprimulgus inornatus* and Long-tailed Nightjar *C. climacurus*. Between 22 October and 18 November I travelled somewhat less frequently along this road and found no further dead nightjars. The road is more or less parallel to the Niger river and quite close to it (100-400 m) for the first 7 km, after which it veers away to a maximum distance of about 5 km. It mostly passes through millet and fallow fields in broad sandy valleys, with areas of laterite plateau nearby.

The plateaux are covered with degraded tiger-bush, a vegetation type with alternating areas of bushes (3-6 m high) and bare soil, which form an irregular stripy pattern. I found no dead nightjars on the next 10 km section of road to the south, which crosses such a plateau with tiger-bush.

The Standard-wing Nightjar is common north of the forest in West Africa, perhaps nesting as far north as 16°N in Mali (Lamarche 1980); in the northern, sahelian part of its range, it occurs only as a non-breeding wet season visitor (Fry *et al.* 1988). It has been considered the most common nightjar in Mali (Lamarche 1980), but appears to be much less common than the Long-tailed Nightjar in central Chad (Newby 1980). Records in the Niamey area are few (Giraudoux *et al.* 1988, S. Millington pers. comm., pers. obs.) and during 17 years at Makalondi (100 km SW of Niamey) P. Souvairan (pers. comm.) recorded it only during April-June 1969 and 1980. Cheke *et al.* (1985) mention a flock of 40 at Niamey airport in December 1969.

The Plain Nightjar is a locally common, wet-season breeding visitor to the Sahel, wintering mainly in wooded savannas to the south (Fry *et al.* 1988, Serle *et al.* 1977, Lamarche 1980). P. Souvairan (pers. comm.) found one live bird of this species and four road-kills in 17 years at Makalondi, in July, September and October 1971 and September and October 1980. During 1990, S. Millington (pers. comm.) saw several in May, June and August. Giraudoux *et al.* (1985) mention one observation and a nest near Tillabéry, both in November 1985.

The Long-tailed Nightjar breeds in the northern savanna part of its range, some birds remaining there all year round (Serle *et al.* 1977, Lamarche 1980, Newby 1980). Fry *et al.* (1988) mention it as a common breeding visitor to Niger. The fact that it is considered common or abundant in many parts of its range may be related to the ease of identification of the male. In the Makalondi region it may be the most common nightjar (P. Souvairan pers. comm.), but recent observations around Niamey are few, and certainly fewer than of the Standard-wing Nightjar (Giraudoux *et al.* 1985, S. Millington pers. comm., pers. obs.).

Of the 57 nightjar road-kills identified, 45 were Standard-wing Nightjars, 9 Plain Nightjars (red morph) and 3 Long-tailed Nightjars. Cheke *et al.* (1985) mention that three of 20 road-killed nightjars examined near Gaya (300 km SSE of Niamey) in August 1984 were Long-tailed, but give no details of the others. Whether road-kills provide a true picture of live nightjar relative abundance is not certain; some species may be more liable to become traffic victims than others. It would seem reasonable, however, to conclude that during September-October 1990 Standard-wing Nightjars were quite common near Niamey, probably more so than the other two species.

Almost two-thirds of the birds were killed on only three of the 25 observation days between the first and last observed road-kills (i.e. on 6 and 9 September and 5 October). That the nightjars may have been flying in flocks is supported by the fact that very often there were two or three dead nightjars very close together, and up to five or six within 100-200 m of each other, sometimes involving two, once all three species (with Standard-wing Nightjars always in the majority). The three days with high numbers of

road-killed nightjars were preceded by appreciable rainfall in the general area the week before. This fits with what is known of migratory movements following the passage of rain-fronts (A. Tye pers. comm.). The nightjars may also have been feeding on insect swarms brought out by the preceding rainfall.

Primary moult was as follows for the Standard-wing Nightjars (first primary innermost; primaries proximal to those mentioned were new, distal old): 13 Sept two missing P7; 21 Sept one with P7 two-thirds grown; 28 Sept one with P8 two-thirds grown, one with P8 two-thirds grown and P9 a pin, one with P9 a pin; 3 Oct three missing P8 or P9; 5 Oct two moulting P7 and P8, three P9 and P10. Replacement of the primaries from the inside out is as expected (cf. Stresemann & Stresemann 1966, as quoted in Herremans & Stevens 1983). The one Plain Nightjar inspected for moult was missing P8 on 3 October.

Thanks are due to P. Souvairan and S. Millington for making available their data, to my fellow travellers, who patiently waited while I inspected dead birds and to my wife, who let me store some of them (well wrapped) in the family freezer. Two anonymous referees made much appreciated comments on an earlier version of this note.

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Received 23 January 1992

Revised 9 July 1992

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