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Received 12 June 1997

Volker Salewski<sup>1</sup> & Judith Korb<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Institut für Vogelforschung "Vogelwarte Helgoland",  
An der Vogelwarte 21, 26386 Wilhelmshaven, Germany

<sup>2</sup>Theodor Boveri Institut, Zoologie II, Am Hubland, 97074 Würzburg, Germany

### First observations on the nest of Purple-headed Starling *Lamprotornis purpureiceps*

The Purple-headed Starling *Lamprotornis purpureiceps* is a common species of various forest types over a wide range of the Guineo-Congolian region. Yet, its nest is surprisingly difficult to find. In 20 years of field work at the biological station of M'Passa in NE Gabon, Brosset & Erard (1986) failed to locate it but wrote: "Vu ... des individus s'intéressant à des cavités dans des branches mortes en haut de grands émergents". During 13 months spent in Odzala National Park in N Congo, I made similar observations of a pair visiting a broken stump of *Santiria trimera* at a height of c. 25 m. The birds were around for at least two weeks (Nov–Dec) but no breeding attempt ensued.

While surveying the avifauna of Lobeke Reserve in SE Cameroon in Apr 1997, a nest, presumed to contain young, was found in a 30-m tall *Alstonia boonei*, in semi-evergreen forest with open canopy. The hole was situated in the stump left by the fall of an old lateral branch, at a height of c. 26 m, and faced south. On 13 April, the pair flew into the tree with food, the male (sexed by its behaviour, especially by its singing) entering the nest before the female; the latter stayed in the nest for just over

10 min., presumably to brood the chicks, while the male sang softly and intermittently on a nearby branch. The pair flew off together. The nest was observed on most days during the subsequent week, and the pair was still bringing food to it, arriving with food together, until I then left the area. Mar–Apr marks the beginning of the rains in that part of Cameroon.

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Received 19 July 1997

Françoise Dowsett-Lemaire

Revised 26 September 1997

12 rue des Lavandes, F-34190 Ganges, France

### The status of Black Cuckoo *Cuculus clamosus* and Red-chested Cuckoo *C. solitarius* in Benin

Black Cuckoo *Cuculus clamosus* is known in Benin from only a single report in Oustalet (1898), who records *Coccyzus cafer* based on two skins collected by Miègemark at Porto Novo and Adjara in January and February 1895. Dowsett & Dowsett-Lemaire (1993) consider that further proof of its presence in the country is required. The species is known as a wet season migrant to the savanna in Togo, Nigeria and Ghana (Cheke & Walsh 1996, Elgood *et al.* 1994, Grimes 1987). It has been recorded in Burkina Faso but not in Niger (Dowsett & Dowsett-Lemaire 1993).

I recorded a single bird on 13 June 1997, in an area of orchard bush near the Forêt Classée of Ouari Maro (9°12'N, 2°10'E). It was feeding amongst the leaves of a low fruit bush, hanging in acrobatic positions as it searched through the foliage, presumably for small insects. It was entirely black, with a curved, cuckoo-like, black bill, and small white spots at the tip of the relatively long tail, with no trace of barring apparent on the underparts (cf. Zimmermann *et al.* 1996). The occurrence of this species is not surprising, and this wet season observation confirms it on the Benin list.

Red-chested Cuckoo *C. solitarius* is known in Benin from observations by J.F. Walsh in the Ouémé valley at Vossa (8°24'N, 2°20'E) and at M'bétékoukou (7°45'N, 2°29'E), and by R.A. Cheke in June 1983 of one calling beside the Beffa River near Vossa (Dowsett & Dowsett-Lemaire 1993, R.A. Cheke and J.F. Walsh *in litt.*). In Togo it is "a not uncommon resident and seasonal migrant to thick gallery forest as far north as Naboulgou [10°9'N, 0°49'E], Apr–Sep" (Cheke & Walsh 1996). It has a similar status in Nigeria (Elgood *et al.* 1994).

I recorded this species frequently, along the gallery forest of the River Ouémé and its tributary the Terou, and in the remnant forest in the Forêt Classée of Ouari Maro,