



**West African Ornithological Society**  
**Société d'Ornithologie de l'Ouest**  
**Africain**



**Join the WAOS and support  
the future availability of free  
pdfs on this website.**

<http://malimbus.free.fr/member.htm>

If this link does not work, please copy it to your browser and try again.  
If you want to print this pdf, we suggest you begin on the next page (2) to conserve paper.

**Devenez membre de la  
SOOA et soutenez la  
disponibilité future des pdfs  
gratuits sur ce site.**

<http://malimbus.free.fr/adhesion.htm>

Si ce lien ne fonctionne pas, veuillez le copier pour votre navigateur et réessayer.  
Si vous souhaitez imprimer ce pdf, nous vous suggérons de commencer par la page suivante  
(2) pour économiser du papier.

- DOWSETT, R.J. & DOWSETT-LEMAIRE, F. (1993) *A Contribution to the Distribution and Taxonomy of Afrotropical and Malagasy Birds*. Res. Rep. 5, Tauraco Press, Liège.
- ELGOOD, J.H., HEIGHAM, J.B., MOORE, A.M., NASON, A.M., SHARLAND, R.E. & SKINNER, N.J. (1994) *The Birds of Nigeria* (2nd ed.). Checklist 4, British Ornithologists' Union, Tring.
- GIBBON, G. (1991) *Southern African Bird Sounds*. Cassettes. South African Birding, Durban.
- GREEN, A.A. & SAYER, J.A. (1977) *La Conservation des Ecosystèmes Forestiers de la Région des Monts Kouffés*. Unpubl. Rep. to FAO/PNUD, FAO, Rome.
- GREEN, A.A. & SAYER, J.A. (1979) The birds of the Pendjari and Arli National Parks (Benin and Upper Volta). *Malimbus* 1: 14–29.
- GRIMES, L.L. (1987) *The Birds of Ghana*. Checklist 9, British Ornithologists' Union, London.
- ZIMMERMAN, D.A., TURNER, D.A. & PEARSON, D.J. (1966) *The Birds of Kenya*. Russell Friedman, Halfway House.

Received 26 September 1997

Revised 25 September 1998

Patrick M. Claffey  
B.P. 302, Parakou, Benin

### **Sharp decline in the population of Pin-tailed Whydah *Vidua macroura* in Benin**

The Pin-tailed Whydah *Vidua macroura* is regarded as common throughout much of its range, and it is certainly so in the countries surrounding Benin. It is a common resident in Nigeria (Elgood et al 1994) and Ghana (Grimes 1987) and an abundant resident in Togo (Cheke & Walsh 1996). The species is also present as a resident in Niger and a breeding resident in Burkina Faso (Dowsett & Forbes Watson 1993). In eleven years of observation in Benin I have classified it as an abundant resident, with some movements from south to north during the rainy season (Claffey 1995).

The earliest observations of males in breeding plumage in Benin are from March (Bouet 1914), with some present up to the end of November or even into December (pers. obs). My earliest records for males in breeding plumage are for 22 April 1995, in the south. The species has been consistently observed in south Benin up to a month earlier than in the north. In Togo, males in breeding plumage have been noted from May to October; there is a similar pattern in both Nigeria and Ghana.

Pin-tailed Whydah is an abundant breeding resident in the Borgou Province of north Benin. Males are noted with groups of 8–10 females, often in flocks of several males with females. However, an apparent sharp decline in the population occurred during the rainy season of 1997. I had no observations in April or May and only a few

by the end of July. It continued to be scarce until the end of the known breeding season. Local people confirmed this difference from other years. At the same time, a possible, but lesser, decline in *Euplectes* spp. was noted, particularly of Yellow-mantled Whydah *E. macrourus*. Lack of quantitative data make the latter observation more difficult to substantiate, but the decline in the population of *V. macroura* was easily established by the simple lack of field observations in the period Apr–Oct 1997.

I have no idea why this should have occurred, apart from a possible epidemic. There has been no apparent habitat destruction. However the increasing use of pesticides for cotton and other agricultural production in the area must be mentioned and *V. macroura* is considered to be a pest by Dept. of Agriculture officials (J.B. Adjakpa pers. comm). R.A.Cheke (*in litt.*) has speculated that the declines in this species might be associated with reductions in available host species; in the study area, these are Orange-cheeked Waxbill *Estrilda melpoda* and Black-rumped Waxbill *E. troglodytes*. However no observations to support this have been made.

My thanks to Drs. J.F. Walsh and R.A. Cheke for comments on this note.

#### References

- BOUET, G. (1914) Liste des oiseaux recueillis ou observés au Dahomey de 1908 à 1911. *Rev. fr. Orn.* 3: 263–269, 304–308.
- CHEKE, R.A. & WALSH, J.F. (1996) *The Birds of Togo*. Checklist 14, British Ornithologists' Union, Tring.
- CLAFFEY, P.M. (1995) Birds of the Bétérou area, Borgou Province, Republic of Benin. *Malimbus* 17: 63–84.
- DOWSETT, R.J. & FORBES-WATSON, A.D. (1993) Checklist of Birds of the Afrotropical and Malagasy Regions. Tauraco Press, Liège.
- ELGOOD, J.H., HEIGHAM J.B., MOORE A.M., NASON A.M., SHARLAND R.E., SKINNER, N.J. (1994) *The Birds of Nigeria*. Checklist 4 (2nd ed.), British Ornithologists' Union, Tring.
- GRIMES, L.G. (1987) *The Birds of Ghana*. Checklist 9, British Ornithologists' Union, London.

Received 1 December 1997

Revised 22 September 1998

Patrick Claffey

B.P. 302, Parakou, Benin

#### Cream-coloured Courser *Cursorius cursor*, new for Ghana

On 19 May 1996, in the coastal area of Ghana, east of Prampram (*c.* 60 km from Accra), we discovered two Cream-coloured Coursers *Cursorius cursor* along the side of the road. The road runs parallel to the coast, *c.* 300 m from the coastline and the