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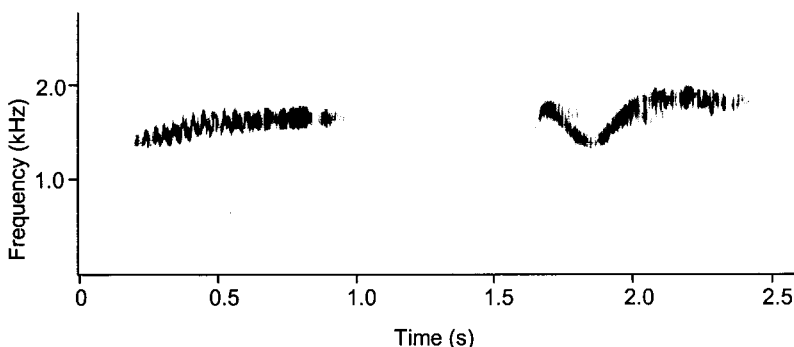
## Short Notes — Notes Courtes

### New bird records in Comoé National Park, Ivory Coast

In the period April–June 2000, during a study visit to the Tropical Ecology Research Camp of the University of Würzburg in the SW corner (8°45'N, 3°50'W) of Comoé National Park, Ivory Coast, three bird species were added to the park list, one of which constitutes a new record for the country.

***Neocossyphus finschii* Finsch's Flycatcher-Thrush.** Sound recordings (Fig. 1) of one individual of this species were obtained in an extensive stretch of gallery forest near the mouth of the River Iringou (8°45'N, 3°50'W). This and another individual were observed and heard calling mostly at mid-canopy level on 1 June 2000. They had cinnamon-rufous underparts, grey-brown upperparts and distinct white tips to the outer tail feathers. The call recorded strongly resembles that of *N. finschii* in Chappuis (2000). It has not previously been recorded in the park (Salewski 2000).

The marked vibration in the first half of the first note and the strong inflection of the second note match recordings from Kakum NP and are typical of the eastern dialect of this species which has previously not been found west of Ghana (C. Chappuis, pers. comm.). Thus, this new record extends the known range of the eastern song type into Ivory Coast. *N. finschii* is mostly a strict forest bird, but is also found in the guinea savanna zone on the Jos Plateau of Nigeria (Keith *et al.* 1992). The present record demonstrates the importance of gallery forests in the savanna zone for certain restricted-range rainforest species.



**Figure 1.** Sonogram of Finsch's Flycatcher-Thrush *Neocossyphus finschii* recorded along the Iringou River.

***Cisticola dorsti* Dorst's Cisticola.** One or two pairs were recorded in an area of relatively closed guinea savanna in Comoé (8°45'N, 3°50'W), on three days in the

first week of June. The habitat did not differ noticeably from the surrounding savanna but, even though considerable time was spent in similar habitat during two months, the cisticolas were only ever found at that one spot. The birds had a rufous cap, contrasting fairly strongly with the greyish-brown back and mantle. The underparts were whitish, becoming increasingly buff towards the flanks and the vent. The vocalization, which could not be recorded due to technical failure, consisted of a brief metallic trill (c. 1 s) on the same pitch, precisely matching the descriptions given in Barlow *et al.* (1997), Urban *et al.* (1997) and Chappuis (2000), while clearly differing from all vocalizations reported from Red-pate Cisticola *C. ruficeps*, of which *C. dorsti* constitutes a sibling species (Chappuis & Erard 1991). *C. ruficeps* has white undertail-coverts and its call lacks the trill of *C. dorsti*. This appears to be the first record of *C. dorsti* in Ivory Coast (Thiollay 1985, Dowsett & Forbes-Watson 1993, Salewski 2000).

The distribution of this recently described species remains inadequately known (Borrow & Demey in press). Initially reported only from NW Nigeria to S Chad (Chappuis & Erard 1991), its presence in Kiang West NP, The Gambia, has subsequently been established (Barlow *et al.* 1997) and it may be presumed widespread in the W African savanna zone. *C. ruficeps* has previously been reported in Comoé NP, but these (and other W African) records of *C. ruficeps* should be re-examined given the two species' near-identical plumage, the recent discovery of *C. dorsti* and the fact that its wide range was not suspected until recently (Barlow *et al.* 1997). The two species are sympatric in the east of their range, but appear not yet to have been found side by side in the same habitat (Chappuis & Erard 1991).

***Pytilia melba* Green-winged Pytilia.** Single males were seen on four occasions in closed savanna habitat. All had a distinctly red face, grey hindneck, green back and red tail. *P. melba* has so far been considered mainly a sahelian species, with a single Ivorian record slightly further south, between Niakaramandougou and Katiola (Holyoak & Seddon 1990), and has not previously been recorded in the park (Salewski 2000).

We thank C. Chappuis for confirming the song type of *N. finschii* and O.P. Lachenaud for information on the Ivorian status of some species. Ron Demey deserves warm thanks for encouragement and for assisting in improving the draft. We are grateful to L. Fishpool and an anonymous reviewer for useful comments on the manuscript.

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Frank E. Rheindt, T. Ulmar Grafe & K.E. Linsenmair

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Dept of Animal Ecology and Tropical Biology,  
Biozentrum, Am Hubland, 97074 Würzburg, Germany

### House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* in NE Nigeria

On 10 Jan 2002, on the shore of Lake Chad at Baga (13°07'N, 13°53'E), Borno State, Nigeria, a House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* landed c. 5 m from us. This is a species familiar to JW. The bird showed the grey crown, black bib, rich chestnut mantle streaked with black, and typical squat shape of House Sparrow. The bright, fresh plumage indicated an adult in breeding condition. In flight the typical “chup” call was given. The large amount of chestnut on the mantle and white in the cheek suggested the race *indicus* (Cramp & Perrins 1994).

It was observed through a telescope for several minutes, gathering fallen seed before flying off directly towards a village c. 500 m away. It returned twice more within half an hour, each time collecting seed and flying off with them to the same part of the village. Unfortunately we had no time to search for the nest or young we suspected to be present.

This is the first record for Nigeria (Elgood *et al.* 1994), with breeding strongly suspected. The likely origin of the bird is unclear. The population of *P. d. indicus*, which established in Senegambia during the 1970s (Barlow *et al.* 1997), seems a likely source for recent records in Mauritania (Borrow & Demey 2001), Mali (J. de Groot pers. comm.) and the Ivory Coast (Rainey & Lachenaud 2002). However the closest records to Nigeria have been vagrants in NE Niger and Chad (E.K. Urban pers. comm.); these and the Nigerian birds might equally have arrived from E or W Africa.

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