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**Société d'Ornithologie de l'Ouest**  
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### 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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### **The status of Black Stork *Ciconia nigra* in West Africa**

Salewski *et al.* (2000) have suggested that the Black Stork *Ciconia nigra* may be a rare Palaearctic migrant to Ivory Coast and Senegal, rather than a vagrant as stated by Dowsett & Forbes-Watson (1993). In fact Dowsett & Forbes-Watson list Black Stork as a regular Palaearctic migrant to Senegal, though vagrant to Ivory Coast and other W African countries. Dowsett & Forbes-Watson (1993) used the term vagrant for “a species with no more than five records (as far as can be determined)”. Their listings of Black Storks from Ivory Coast, Togo and Benin are based on data in Walsh (1991). However, that paper lists 32 sightings, involving 82 birds at 25 sites, including eight sight records from Benin, 11 records from Ghana and five from Togo. Therefore, even on their own criterion Dowsett & Forbes-Watson (1993) should not have classed Black Stork as vagrant in Ghana, Togo and Benin.

Walsh (1991) stated that Black Storks had been reported from five W African countries since 1965. These records, which include birds seen in two northern winters at three sites (in Ghana, Togo and on the Benin–Burkina Faso border), together with the records in Salewski *et al.* (2000), indicate that the W African savanna zone is inside the normal migratory range of the western populations of the Black Stork, as is clearly shown on the maps in Brown *et al.* (1962) and Hancock *et al.* (1992). However, despite recent increases in breeding populations in Europe (Snow & Perrins 1998) and regular migration through Corsica since the 1980s (Thibault & Bonaccorsi 1999) the Black Stork, inevitably, remains a rare visitor to W Africa.

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