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February / février 2010
New bird records from Mauritania

by Volker Salewski, Heiko Schmaljohann & Marc Herremans

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Summary

A total of 13 months of avifaunal research was carried out in Mauritania between November 2000 and May 2004. We describe 65 species new to the country, or rarely reported, or observed outside their confirmed range, although previous unconfirmed observations exist for many in the last category. Breeding populations of Stonechat *Saxicola torquata moptana* and Spectacled Warbler *Sylvia conspicillata* were discovered. The occurrence of Tristram's Warbler *Sylvia deserticola* was confirmed and six species new for Mauritania discovered (Verreaux's Eagle *Aquila verreauxii*, Lesser Striped Swallow *Hirundo abyssinica*, Moussier’s Redstart *Phoenicurus moussieri*, Iberian Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus ibericus*, River Prinia *Prinia fluviatilis*, Zebra Waxbill *Amandava subflava*).

Résumé

Nouvelles observations d'oiseaux en Mauritanie. Un total de 13 mois de recherche sur l’avifaune a été mené en Mauritanie entre novembre 2000 et mai 2004. Nous décrivons 65 espèces nouvelles pour le pays, ou observées rarement ou encore observées en dehors de leur habitat reconnu, bien que des observations antérieures non confirmées existent déjà pour beaucoup de la dernière catégorie. Des populations nicheuses du Traquet pâtre *Saxicola torquata moptana* et de la Fauvette à lunettes *Sylvia conspicillata* ont été trouvées. La présence de la Fauvette de l’Atlas *Sylvia deserticola* a été confirmée et on a découvert six espèces nouvelles pour la Mauritanie (Aigle de Verreaux *Aquila verreauxii*, Hirondelle à gorge striée *Hirundo abyssinica*, Rouge-queue de Moussier *Phoenicurus moussieri*, Pouillot ibérique *Phylloscopus ibericus*, Prinia aquatique *Prinia fluviatilis*, Bengali zébré *Amandava subflava*).
Introduction

The distribution of bird species in Mauritania is of special interest as the country is at the interface of two zoogeographical regions: Palaearctic and Afrotropical (Browne 1981a, Hoyo et al. 1992). Therefore, many tropical and Palaearctic species may reach their northern and southern breeding limits within Mauritania. The two zones are separated by the Sahara, which serves as an ecological barrier. However, the coast and oases within the desert, as well as wetlands in the Sahel zone connect the two regions. Palaearctic birds have been found breeding in the Afrotropics in SW Mauritania (Browne 1981b) and afrotropical species in N Mauritania (Lamarche 1988). Furthermore, both Palaearctic and afrotrropical migrants, which use the country as stopover areas, increase the overlap between Palaearctic and tropical faunas. Additionally, there are true desert species, adapted to conditions in the Sahara. Thus, Mauritania could serve as a field laboratory for study of the co-occurrence of faunal elements from different zoogeographical regions, as well as the consequences of the relatively recent desertification on gene drift and speciation.

Such studies require a profound knowledge of the country’s avifauna. Relatively little ornithological work has been done in Mauritania, with the exception of local studies by Gee (1984), studies of Palaearctic migrants in Banc d’Arguin NP (e.g. Zwarts et al. 1998) and SW Mauritania (Browne 1982) and of waterbirds in the south (e.g. Dodman & Diagana 2003). A species list was published privately by Lamarche (1988) but is difficult to obtain and contains many generalizations of distribution rather than detailing individual records. The list of Dowsett & Dowsett-Lemaire (1993) is based on Lamarche (1988) plus other records, including unpublished ones (P.W.P. Browne pers. comm.). Borrow & Demey (2001) review the avifauna but their distribution ranges for Mauritania are generally much more restricted than the records reviewed below suggest, since they omitted many records from Lamarche (1988), regarding them as unconfirmed (R. Demey pers. comm.).

During an investigation of the migration strategies of Palaearctic migrants across the Sahara, the Swiss Ornithological Institute carried out three exploratory trips (Nov 2000, Sep 2001, Mar–Apr 2002) and three field seasons (Feb–May 2003, Aug–Nov 2003, Feb–May 2004) in Mauritania, with up to 30 people engaged in field work at a time, for a total of approximately 13 months, at multiple sites. Bird observations were recorded daily. Here, we list all observations of species rarely reported from the country or far outside the species’ range as indicated by Borrow & Demey (2001). Many of the latter simply confirm information already in Lamarche (1988). We omit detailed discussion of inland records of typical coastal species, such as Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus*, Eurasian Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia*, Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus*, Collared Pratincole *Glareola pratincola*, Curlew Sandpiper *Calidris ferruginea*, Dunlin *C. alpina*, Curlew *Numenius arquata*, Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa*, Common Redshank *Tringa totanus*, Marsh Sandpiper *T. stagnatilis*, Gull-billed Tern *Gelochelidon nilotica*, Sandwich Tern *Sterna*
sandvicensis, Black Tern Chlidonias niger and Whiskered Tern C. hybridus, from Tagourâret, Guelta Metraugha, Tenlaba, Ouadâne, Gabou and Tichít (all wetlands or held water after the rains), because it is known that these migrants cross the desert regularly (Moreau 1967, Dowsett 1980). This also applies to most Palaearctic Sylviidae mist-netted outside the range indicated by Borrow & Demey (2001) but on presumed migration routes (e.g. Grasshopper Warbler Locustella naevia in Tichít, Aquatic Warbler Acrocephalus paludicola near Nouakchott). We also omit observations of African Anatidae like White-faced Whistling Duck Dendrocygna viduata, Egyptian Goose Alopochen aegyptiacus, Spur-winged Goose Plectropterus gambensis, Knob-billed Duck Sarkidiornis melanotos and Purple Swamphen Porphyrio porphyrio seen in small numbers outside the range indicated by Borrow & Demey (2001), such as at Maghmouda, Gabou or Lac D’Aleg, because Dodman et al. (1999) and Dodman & Diagana (2003) revealed that thousands of these species might occur in some of these localities. Details of these omitted observations are available from the authors.

All locations mentioned are listed in Table 1. The “plateau El Aaguer” of Lamarche (1988) is not listed in his gazetteer. It is probably the partial faunal reserve of El Ager between Kiffa and Ayoun el Atrous and is identical with the region of Affolé (P.W.P. Browne pers. comm.). Nomenclature of localities is from the Michelin map Afrique Nord et Ouest (1994) or Lamarche (1988). Bird nomenclature and taxonomic sequence follow Borrow & Demey (2001), abundance is according to Morel & Tye (1995). Observers’ initials are given for most records except for common birds that were observed by many members of the team. Observers were: AH Agneta Heuman, AM André Mauley, AS Adrian Schlageter, ARM Antonio Romano Muñoz, BA Bettina Almasi, BB Bruno Bruderer, CS Chantal Spiess, DZ Daniel Zürrer, DP Dieter Peter, EB Erich Bächler, FK Fränzi Korner-Nievergelt, FL Felix Liechti, FS Florian Steiner, HS Heiko Schmaljohann, HSt Herbert Stark, IM Ivan Maggini, LF Luzius Fischer, MD Markus Deutsch, MG Matthias Griesser, MH Marc Herremans, MS Martin Suhrbek, MSc Michael Schaad, MSp Martin Spiess, MT Marco Thoma, NS Nina Seifert, OM Olivia Meinen, PJ Peter Jones, PK Pius Korner, PS Pia Schütz, RA Res Altwegg, SK Stefan Kunz, SB Stefan Bitsch, SS Sabine Schaufelberger, TR Tobias Roth, TS Thomas Stalling, VM Veronika Martignoli, VS Volker Salewski. In the list we describe our records followed by the species’ status given by former authors in square brackets.

Species list

Podicipedidae

*Podiceps ruficollis* Little Grebe. Frequent, up to 12, Akjoujt, Mar and May 2004; a pair with two young, May (AM, FL, LF, VM). [Scarce winter visitor in NW, probably scarce visitor in SW, probably Afrotropical origin (Browne 1982); *T. r. capensis* breeds Aug–Feb in the south and Sahel (Lamarche 1988).]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Coordinates</th>
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<tr>
<td>Ablawakh, 18°30’N, 16°05’W, L</td>
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<td>Adrar (region), 20°30’N, 13°30’W, L</td>
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<td>Affolé (region), 16°55’N, 10°25’W, L</td>
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<td>Aghrijit, 18°24’N, 9°15’W, L</td>
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<td>Akjoujt, 19°25’N, 14°46’W, SOI</td>
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<td>Aklé Awana, 18°9’N, 5°40’W, L</td>
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<td>Akmakam, 21°53’N, 11°13’W, SOI</td>
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<td>Assaba (region), 16°20’N, 11°52’W, L</td>
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<td>Atar, 20°31’N, 13°3’W, L</td>
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<td>Ayoûn el Atroûs, 16°38’N, 9°37’W, L</td>
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<td>Banc d’Arguin, 19°43’N, 16°18’W, L</td>
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<td>Bir Amrâne, 22°47’N, 8°43’W, SOI</td>
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<td>Bogué, 16°35’N, 14°16’W, L</td>
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<td>Bou Mdeïd, 17°26’N, 11°21’W, L</td>
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<td>Bou Tountaya, 16°51’N, 15°38’W, D</td>
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<td>Bougarie (lake), 16°37’N, 11°15’W, SOI</td>
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<td>Boutlimil, 17°33’N, 14°42’W, L</td>
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<td>Cap Blanc, 21°0’N, 17°4’W, L</td>
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<td>Cap Tafarit, 20°8’N, 16°16’W, L</td>
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<td>Cap Tegarat, 20°13’N, 16°10’W, WWW</td>
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<td>Cap Timirist, 19°23’N, 16°32’W, L</td>
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<td>Char, 21°31’N, 12°51’W, PB</td>
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<td>Chegga, 25°25’N, 5°48’W, L</td>
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<td>Chinguetti, 20°27’N, 12°22’W, L</td>
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<td>Chott’ Boul, 16°36’N, 16°26’W, L</td>
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<td>Diawling NP, 16°18’N, 16°24’W, SOI</td>
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<td>El Gaviya, 18°27’N, 10°49’W, SOI</td>
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<td>El Ghallâouïya, 21°35’N, 10°35’W, L</td>
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<td>F’derric, 22°41’N, 12°42’W, WWW</td>
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<td>Foun Gleita, 16°10’N, 12°40’W, L</td>
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<td>Gabou, 18°21’N, 12°20’W, SOI</td>
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<td>Gorgol (region), 15°45’N, 13°0’W, L</td>
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<td>Guimaka (region), 15°30’N, 12°0’W, L</td>
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<td>Ibi (region), 20°2’N, 13°22’W, L</td>
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<td>Idini, 17°57’N, 15°28’W, SOI</td>
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<td>Iouik, 19°53’N, 16°18’W, SOI</td>
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<td>Jbéliat (region), 20°50’N, 12°50’W, L</td>
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<td>Kaedi, 16°9’N, 13°30’W, L</td>
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Phalacrocoracidae

Ardeidae

Butorides striatus Green-backed Heron. One, Mare de Bougarie, 24 Sep 2003 (BB); at least three, N’Beïka, 8 Oct 2003 (FL, MS, TR, TS, VS). [Common near Senegal river (Gee 1984); local to common in Senegal valley, also humid areas in Sahel (Lamarche 1988).]


Anatidae
*Tadorna tadorna* Common Shelduck. Feathers found, Akmakam, Apr 2003, possibly carried by a raptor (MSc). [Sporadic at coast (Gee 1984, Lamarche 1988).]

Accipitridae
*Meriurus metabates* Dark Chanting Goshawk. One, PK 28, 26 Aug 2003 (DP, MD, MG, MT, PK); one, Ouadâne, four days during Mar–May 2004 (DZ, HS, MT, VS). [Common (*M. m. metabates*) Senegal River area (Gee 1984); irregular elsewhere, breeding Tagant, Jul (possibly *M. m. neumanni*) (Dekeyser 1954, Lamarche 1988).]

*Accipiter badius* Shikra. One, PK 28, 9 Sep 2003 (MD, MT, PK); one, lake at Bougarie, 24 Sep 2003 (BB). [Rare Nouakchott (Gee 1984); in rainy season in S Sahel, to 17°30’N (Lamarche 1988).]

*Accipiter nisus* Eurasian Sparrowhawk. Male, Ouadâne, 26 Apr 2003 (HS); ten, 29 Sep to 15 Oct 2003 (EB, HS, MT); male mist-netted, Tichît, 16 Aug 2003, one seen there 20 and 23 Aug 2003 (ARM, MS, PS, VS). [Oct–Apr at Cap Timirist, Nouakchott; rare inland, e.g. Char (Heim de Balsac 1949–51, Lamarche 1988).]

*Butastur rufipennis* Grasshopper Buzzard. Immature, Ouadâne, 7–8 May 2004 (HS), northernmost record. [Rains migrants to everywhere in S, rarely north of 17°N (Dekeyser 1954, Lamarche 1988).]


A. verreauxi Verreaux’s Eagle. Tenlaba: one subadult female 5–6 Sep 2003, one near-adult probably male, 23 Sep 2003 (MH). On all three occasions unmistakable characteristics observed: very large, long-winged; almost straight leading edge of wing when soaring, and exceptionally wide, strongly bulging secondaries, making the wing much narrower near the tip and body than at level of outer secondaries; large white flashes over most of primaries, some barring towards outer wing and secondaries, visible from under and upper side. When soaring and gliding, primary tips mostly conspicuously uplifted. First bird had secondaries and tail with some blackish, but mostly brownish, barred feathers; body, under and upper wing-coverts were a mixture of blackish and brownish feathers; white patches on shoulder connected over back to rump. Second bird had more black-and-white plumage, but smaller patches of white on shoulders and rump; still some brownish feathers on body and under wing. New species for the country. [Previous westernmost records Hombori, Mali (15°16´N, 1°40´W) (Lamarche 1980); recently recorded Iherir, S Algeria (F. Belbachir, pers. comm.).

A. chrysaetos Golden Eagle. An adult pair, c. 12 km east of Tichit, Oct 2003, seen whenever the site was visited, two huge eyries in cliffs there (MS, TR, TS, VS); an immature, c. 10 km south of Ouadâne, 17 Oct 2003 (SK); two adults, possibly resident pairs, at each of Tenlaba and Ouadâne, Mar–May 2004 (AM, AS, BB, FK, HS, PK). [Scarce Palearctic migrant Sep–Mar, rare inland, no breeding records (Heim de Balsac & Mayaud 1962, Gee 1984, Lamarche 1988, Dowsett & Dowsett-Lemaire 1993); breeds NE Mali (Goar & Rutkowski 2000).


Falconidae


F. cherrug Saker Falcon. One, Akjoujt, 18 Mar 2003 (HS, MSc). [Rare postnuptial migrant, mainly autumn records; one record Aleg, May (Lamarche 1988).]

F. pelegrinoides Barbary Falcon. Regular Ouadâne (AH, BA, EB, HS, OM), Tenlaba (AM, AS, MH, PK), where a pair visited a cliff crevice with prey daily Apr–May 2003 (MH), and Akmakam (seven mist-netted, more observed: MSc, VM) throughout the study. Suggests resident population. [Baie de l’Etoile (Bird 1937); one near Nouakchott (Gee 1984).]

Phasianidae

**Rallidae**

*Crex crex* Corn crake. One found dead, Ouadâne, 20 Oct 2003 (PJ), one observed there 24 Oct 2003 (NS). [Four records: Kiffa, Cap Blanc, Nouadhibou (Lamarche 1988).]

*Gallinula chloropus* Common Moorhen. Common Akmakam, Feb–May 2003, including five young in late Apr (MSc; VM); 12 including three young, Gabou, 9 Oct 2003 (FL, TR, TS); frequent, up to 12 birds, Akjoujt, Mar and May 2004 (AM, FL, LF, VM). [Most records coastal, one dead Tichit (Gee 1984); unconfirmed breeding Adrar (Lamarche 1988).]

*Fulica atra* Eurasian Coot. Frequent, up to four, Akjoujt, Mar, May 2004 (AM, FL, VM). [Rare, coastal wetlands, Lac D’Aleg, Senegal valley (Gee 1984, Lamarche 1988).]

**Jacanidae**

*African Jacana* *Actophilornis africana*. More than ten, Maghmouda, 21 Sep 2001 (DP, FL, RA, VS); one, Cap Timirist, 30 Oct 2003 (VS). [Nouakchott, probably breeding (Gee 1984); Senegal valley, Sahel wetlands, Lac D’Aleg, Maghmouda (Lamarche 1988).]

**Charadriidae**

*Charadrius pecuarius* Kittlitz’s Plover. *C* eight, Maghmouda, 21 Sep 2001 (DP, FL, RA, VS); one, Cap Timirist, 30 Oct 2003 (VS). [Nouakchott, probably breeding (Gee 1984); Senegal valley, Sahel wetlands, Lac D’Aleg, Maghmouda (Lamarche 1988).]

**Columbidae**


**Cuculidae**

*Oxylophus jacobinus* Jacobin Cuckoo. One, Lac D’Aleg, 5 Sep 2001 (VS); two, Oualâta, 18 Sep 2001 (VS). [Senegal river to Adrar, Jun–Nov (Browne 1981a, Gee 1984, Lamarche 1988).]

*Chrysococcyx caprius* Didric Cuckoo. At least two calling, Lac D’Aleg, 6 Sep 2001 (DP, FL, RA, VS); daily, Oualâta, 18–20 Sep 2001 (DP, FL, RA, VS); two males calling, at least one female, Tenadi, 19 Aug 2003 (MH). [Common Senegal River area, moves north during rains, Jul–Nov (Gee 1984, Lamarche 1988).]

**Strigidae**


**Caprimulgidae**

*Caprimulgus eximius* Golden Nightjar. Frequent, most likely one individual, Ouadâne, 30 Apr to 6 May 2003 (AH, BA, HS, OM); one feather and one exhausted bird c. 4 km apart on same day, Idini, 16 Oct 2003 (VS, FL); one, Nouakchott, 18 (netted) and 25 Oct 2003 (MH). [One record Nouakchott, common 50–100 km south of Nouakchott, autumn 1974 (Gee1984); central and S Sahel (Jun–Dec) (Lamarche
Apodidae


Meropidae

Merops albicollis White-throated Bee-eater. Up to ten near Tidjikja, 8–9 Sep 2001 (DP, FL, RA, VS); abundant Oualâta, 18–20 Sep 2001 (DP, FL, RA, VS); uncommon Tichît, Sep 2003 (ARM, MS, PS VS); several, N’Beïka, 8 Oct 2003 (FL, MS, TR, TS, VS); common Gabou, 8–10 Oct 2003 (FL, MS, TR, TS, VS). [Common in SW and Nouakchott area (Gee 1984); rains visitor everywhere to 18°N (Dekeyser 1954, Lamarche 1988).]

Coraciidae


Bucerotidae


Capitonidae


Trachyphonus margaritatus Yellow-breasted Barbet. One, N’Beïka, 8 Oct 2003 (TR). [South of 17°30’N except Tagant, rare in west (Lamarche 1988).]

Picidae

**Alaudidae**

*Ramphocoris clothei* Thick-billed Lark. Three, c. 30 km west of Chinguetti, 25 Sep 2003 (MH). [Rare in N, single records Chegga, Nouakchott (Lamarche 1988).]

*Galerida thekla* Thekla Lark. Two south of Nouakchott, 2 Sep 2001 (DP, RA, VS); one, PK 28, 18 Aug 2003 (DP). Southernmost records. [Rare: Kediet ej Jill, Jbéliat, Banc d’Arguin NP (Lamarche 1988).]


**Hirundinidae**


**Motacillidae**

*Motacilla flava cinereocapilla* Yellow Wagtail. One, Akmakam, 21 Feb 2003 (HS); one, Ouadâne, 11 Mar 2003 (VS); frequent, Iouïk, 5–11 Mar 2003; several, Tenadi, 5–6 Mar 2003 (FS, IM); one, Diawling NP, 26 Feb 2004 (EB, HS, MT, VS). [Uncommon, 1–2% of *M. flava* at roost sites (Lamarche 1988); ssp. *cinereocapilla* Mali to Nigeria (Borrow & Demey 2001).]

**Laniidae**


**Turdidae**


*Saxicola torquata* Stonechat. Pair, of which male in breeding plumage, Diawling NP, 29 Feb 2004 (EB, HS, MT, VS). White rump indicated *S. t. moptana*, which is the first record of this subspecies from Mauritania. [Nouackchott, Nouâdhibou (Browne 1981a); classed as Palaearctic migrant by Browne (1982), Dowsett & Dowsett-Lemaire (1993) and Lamarche (1988). *S. t. moptana* is resident in Senegal delta (Borrow & Demey 2001).]

**Sylviidae**

*Phylloscopus ibericus* Iberian Chiffchaff. PK 28, Ouadâne and Tenlaba. Many “Chiffchaff” mist-netted in spring and autumn were this taxon, as indicated by their moss-green mantle, yellow underwing coverts and bright yellow undertail coverts, unlike Chiffchaff *P. collybita* (Svensson 2001). First records for the country.

*Prinia flaviatilis* River Prinia. Common Diawling NP (EB, HS, IM, MS, MT, TR, VS), a grey prinia in reeds, with longer tail and less contrasting colours than Tawny-flanked Prinia *P. subflava* (which was observed in breeding plumage on vegetated sand dunes). First record for the country.

*Cisticola juncidis* Zitting Cisticola. Several heard in reeds, Lac D’Aleg, 6 Sep 2001; one, Maghmouda, 22 Sep 2001 (DP, FL, RA, VS). [Senegal delta and valley (Gee 1984, Lamarche 1988), also NE of Moudjeria, Lac D’Aleg (Browne 1981a).]

*Sylvia curruca* Lesser Whitethroat. One, Ouadâne, 16 Apr 2003 (HS); one netted, Nouakchott, 14 Oct 2003 (MH; Fig. 1). [Coastal and oases, few records in the region (Lamarche 1988); main wintering grounds Chad eastward (Borrow & Demey 2001).]

![Figure 1. Lesser Whitethroat Sylvia curruca caught at Nouakchott (photo MH).](image)

*S. conspicillata* Spectacled Warbler. Regular Ouadâne, Feb–Apr 2003 (AH, AM, BA, HS, OM, VM, VS); a breeding population discovered there, Feb 2004 (AM, FK, HS, MT, PK, VS). [Palaearctic migrant on coast from 18°N to Senegal delta, also wooded wadis and oases (*e.g.* Ouadâne) inland around 17°30’N, 14–16°W (Browne 1982, Gee 1984, Lamarche 1988); winters and nests Zemmour (Heim de Balsac & Mayaud 1962).]

*S. desertico la* Tristram’s Warbler. One, Ouadâne, 23 Oct 2003 (HS); one, Bir Amrâne, 7 Apr 2004 (VM). First records since 1980. [Nouakchott, one record (Gee 1984); Kédiet ej Jill, Chinguetti, Ouagchogda (Lamarche 1988).]

**Muscicapidae**


**Corvidae**

*Corvus albus* Pied Crow. Three and one, Iouïk, 9–10 Mar 2003 (FS, HSt, IM, SB). Northernmost record. [North to 17°N, rains records Nouakchott (Aug), Boutilimit
Sturnidae

*Lamprotornis caudatus* Long-tailed Glossy Starling. Frequent, up to seven, PK 28, 18 Sep to 25 Oct 2003 (MG, HSt, MT, PK). [Common up to 60 km north of Senegal valley (Browne 1981a, Gee 1984, Lamarche 1988).]

Passeridae

*Passer domesticus indicus* House Sparrow. Throughout study period, abundant Nouakchott, frequent Tichít, Ouadâne, Tenlaba; recorded Akjoujt, Tidjikja, Aleg, Idini, Bögü, Kaedi. First inland records in Mauritania, but probably now in every larger settlement in the country. [Recorded Nouakchott since Dec 1982 but probably there earlier, Nouâdhîbou, Méderdra, Iouîk, Cap Timírist, Ablawakh, Lemsid (Lamarche 1988); Tiouîlt (Bengtsson 1997); frequent in coastal settlements north to Cap Tegarat (Robel 1999).]


Ploceidae

*Euplectes afer* Yellow-crowned Bishop. Several, Lac D’Aleg, 6 Sep 2001 (DP, RA, VS); ten, Maghmouda, 21 Sep 2001 (DP, FL, RA, VS). [Common Senegal delta and valley, Sahel wetlands, breeding Lac R’kiz and Lac D’Aleg (Browne 1981a, Lamarche 1988).]


Emberizidae


Discussion

We recorded 65 bird species which are either rarely observed or new for Mauritania, or out of their known range as indicated by Borrow & Demey (2001) but many of these had already been reported from similar latitudes by Lamarche (1988). Most of
our records are thus probably not range extensions, but rather reflect lack of previous study. Our records demonstrate that Palaearctic as well as Afrotropical species are much more widespread in the desert than previously thought. Important habitats are oases and vegetated wadis in the Sahara, as mentioned by Lamarche (1988).

The Grey Woodpecker and Dark Chanting Goshawk illustrate the kind of question that may arise from species distribution observations in Mauritania. Grey Woodpecker is not known to disperse or migrate over long distances (Fry et al. 1988), so birds in Ouadâne may be part of a relict population, extending back before desertification. Studies of such species could give insights into the distribution of species prior to the establishment of the desert and on the minimal area required to sustain viable populations. The Dark Chanting Goshawk in Ouadâne could be a vagrant from the south or from the small remnant population in Morocco. Lamarche (1988) mentions the possible occurrence of M. m. neumanni in the north (breeding in Tagant). Does the region serve as an area through which gene flow between Moroccan neumanni and sub-Saharan metabates might occur or are the populations isolated from each other as a result of desertification?

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