



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



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et membres de la SOOA est invité à en informer le Secrétaire, Roger Wilkinson (Zoological Gardens, Chester CH2 1LH, U.K. <r.wilkinson@chesterzoo.co.uk>).

Conseil de la SOOA

Stephen Marchant, 1912–2003

Stephen Marchant, who made an important contribution to knowledge of the birds of Nigeria, died in Australia on 30 August 2003.

Stephen was in S Nigeria 1940–1 and again from 1946–9. He published two important papers on his observations and collections of the birds of S Nigeria (Marchant 1942, 1953), as well as an interesting commentary on Upper and Lower Guinea forest avifaunas (Marchant 1954). He was the first to find *Stizorhina finschi* in Nigeria, and his detailed field description (Marchant 1942: 169–170) contained the pertinent comment that “these habits suggest a member of the Muscicapidae, and are not at all what one would expect from *Neocossyphus*.” He also added *Dendropicos gabonensis*, *Andropadus ansorgei*, *Apalis rufogularis*, *Muscicapa caerulescens*, *Myioparus griseigularis*, *Megabyas flammulatus*, *Dyaphorophya concreta*, *D. tonsa*, *Laniarius leucorhynchus*, *Anthoscopus flavifrons* to the Nigerian avifauna (Marchant 1942, 1953), several of these not the easiest birds to identify in the field.

Stephen maintained very strict standards of identification; for example, although he believed he had identified *Malimbus cassini* (Marchant 1942) he later added (Marchant 1953: 67) that he had failed to confirm it, and that whenever he thought he had collected one, it turned out to be *M. malimbicus*. He doubted that *M. cassini* occurred in Nigeria (a doubt now widely shared), and his comments ought to be borne in mind regarding claims that *M. cassini* occurs further west still (e.g. Grimes 1987). His reservations about field identification in Nigeria of *Muscicapa ussheri* (Marchant 1966) have not been heeded. He had a good ear for vocalisations, noting for example that *Nectarinia verticalis* included imitations in its song. He made interesting observations on the behaviour of *Melichneutes robustus* (Marchant 1953: 51); incidentally, his record from Umuagwu was the same as that mentioned by Bannerman (1951) from Owerri, so only one locality is concerned and not two as suggested by Elgood *et al.* (1994). His detailed field notes and selective collection of specimens (Marchant 1953) were a model of responsible ornithology. Bannerman (1951) made frequent mention of the value of Stephen’s contribution.

Stephen Marchant is remembered in the name *Illadopsis cleaveri marchanti* (Serle 1956: 22). He himself named two new subspecies: *Indicator minor pallidus* (Marchant 1950: 25) and *Macrosphenus kempfi flammeus* (Marchant 1950: 26), both from Umuagwu, Owerri Division, Nigeria. White (1950: 43) named *Anthreptes collaris nigeriae* from a specimen collected by Marchant at Owerri in 1949.

Stephen Marchant was awarded the Union Medal of the British Ornithologists' Union in 1971, for his eminent services to ornithology. "Few members of the B.O.U. can have exploited their travels with greater ornithological distinction" (*Ibis* (1971) 113: 403–404). Stephen and his wife Mary settled in Australia in 1963. Those who, like us, had the pleasure of staying with them at Moruya in New South Wales, will remember Stephen's enthusiasm for and knowledge of the local birds he studied. Obituaries detailing Stephen's enormous contribution to Australasian ornithology have been published by Davies (2004) and Fullagar (2004).

I am grateful for help from Stephen's daughter Sarah.

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