



**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.

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.

## Short Notes — Notes Courtes

### New bird records for Benin

During a visit from 24 Mar to 15 Apr 2006 to the Pendjari National Park (PNP) and its adjacent buffer zone, in Benin, we recorded four bird species new to the country, plus one with only a single previous record. All of these species occur in neighbouring countries, some with an apparently patchy distribution (Borrow & Demey 2004), so our observations are unlikely to indicate range extensions but suggest that the area is under-recorded. We also comment on the subspecies of one additional species.

***Pelecanus onocrotalus* Great White Pelican.** On 4 Apr a Great White Pelican flew over a small waterhole at *c.* 11°23'N, 1°36'E in the north of PNP. It was distinguished from the more greyish Pink-backed Pelican *P. rufescens* by its pure white plumage contrasting with the black remiges. On 7 Apr it was seen swimming on the water, when the yellowish pouch and pink bare skin around the eye confirmed the identification. It was seen again on 8 Apr. Great White Pelicans occur in Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, and Nigeria (Dowsett & Forbes-Watson 1993, Borrow & Demey 2004), S Ghana (Grimes 1987) and S Togo (Cheke & Walsh 1996). Its distribution map in Brown *et al.* (1982) includes Benin, but there appear to be no previous published records.

***Hieraaetus ayresii* Ayres's Hawk Eagle.** On 29 Mar VS and C. Schmidl observed a small eagle flying over savanna at *c.* 10°52'N, 1°24'E in the buffer zone of the PNP. When first observed, the black and white mottled underwing coverts and the striped remiges and tail, together with its white head were obvious. The Honey Buzzard *Pernis apivorus*, which can have a similar colour pattern, was excluded by the short tail and especially the head. The Cassin's Hawk Eagle *Spizaetus africanus* was excluded by the underwing coverts, which were unlike the mainly black underwing coverts of adult Cassin's Hawk Eagle and the rufous-streaked underwing coverts of juveniles (Borrow & Demey 2004). Furthermore, the pure white of the head extended out along the leading edge of the wing (see Borrow & Demey 2004). Ayres's Hawk Eagle has a patchy distribution from Guinea to Congo. Our bird seems to be one of the northernmost records of it, with scattered observations in Gambia, Mali and Chad (Borrow & Demey 2004). It is included for Benin in the distribution map in Brown *et al.* (1982), but there is apparently no confirmed published record.

***Luscinia megarhynchos* Nightingale.** On 8 and 9 Apr a Nightingale was observed in a thicket besides the Pendjari river in the PNP at *c.* 11°28'N, 1°34'W. On 10 one was mist-netted nearby and its identity confirmed (outermost primary longer than primary coverts in contrast to Thrush Nightingale *L. luscinia*: Svensson 1992). The bird had a fat score of seven on the 0–8 scale of Kaiser (1993) indicating that it was preparing for migration. The Nightingale is confirmed for all countries around Benin (Dowsett

& Dowsett-Lemaire 1993, Borrow & Demey 2004). It is included for Benin in the distribution map in Keith *et al.* (1992), but there is apparently no published record.

***Myrmecocichla cinnamomeiventris* Cliff Chat.** We observed in the buffer zone near Batia at least five pairs of Cliff Chats, of which all the males had distinctive white head tops whereas those of the females were rufous grey indicating that they were *M. c. coronata*. The site was very close or identical to the site where Green (1980: Fig. 1, locality d) recorded *M. c. bambarae*. We cannot, however, confirm that two forms of Cliff Chat occur in the area, since we visited only one of Green's localities. The status of the two forms of this species in Benin remains unclear (cf. Keith *et al.* 1992).

***Cisticola eximius* Black-backed Cisticola.** Between 3 and 9 Apr at least two pairs and a single bird of the Black-backed Cisticola were observed on an open grassy plain at c. 11°23'N, 1°36'E. They were heavily streaked black on the top of the head and on the back, contrasting with the rufous neck and rump. Their behaviour and habitat use differed markedly from those of Croaking Cisticola *C. natalensis*, Short-winged Cisticola *C. brachypterus*, and Tawny-flanked Prinia *Prinia subflava*, which were also present. Unlike these species, the Black-backed Cisticolas avoided thick dry grass, seldom clung onto the grass, and were never seen in bushes. They were most often observed on the ground in more open and burnt areas with sparse short grass where they walked in an almost lark-like manner. On 9 Apr one was mist-netted and the identification confirmed (Fig. 1). The species is recorded from S Ghana (Grimes 1987) and N Togo (Cheke & Walsh 1996), and is not uncommon in Nigeria (Elgood *et al.* 1994). Our observations suggest that these populations are connected and that the species may occur regularly in N Benin in adequate habitats.



**Figure 1. Black-backed Cisticola in the Pendjari NP, Benin, 9 Apr 2006.**

***Cisticola guinea* Dorst's *Cisticola*.** On 14 Apr we observed a Dorst's *Cisticola* in the buffer zone next to the PNP c. 3 km south of Batia (10°54'N, 1°29'E). It was a medium-sized *cisticola* with the head top rufous and the back plain brown. Its underparts including undertail coverts appeared buffish-rufous. The bird did not call and was observed only for a short period when it came to drink water dripping out of rocks at the top of a gorge. It was distinguished from the Short-winged *Cisticola* by its larger size and from the Croaking *Cisticola* and Black-backed *Cisticola* by the unstreaked back. Singing *Cisticola* *C. cantans* is larger and in general darker than the bird observed, which was more rufous in general appearance especially on the underparts. Recently, Dowsett-Lemaire *et al.* (2005) suggested that *C. dorsti* is a synonym of the West African subspecies of Red-pate *Cisticola* *C. ruficeps guinea* and should accordingly be renamed *C. guinea*. According to Dowsett-Lemaire *et al.* (2005) there is only one *C. ruficeps* record from Benin, in the north, but no identification details were given (Holyoak & Seddon 1990).

We thank Aristide Tehou, Brice Sinsin and the Pendjari Park Project for the opportunity to stay and do research in the PNP and its buffer zone. C. Schmidl kindly provided Fig. 1. This study was part of the BIOLOG BIOTA-West framework funded by the German Federal Ministry for Education and Research.

#### References

- BORROW, N. & DEMEY, R. (2004) *Birds of Western Africa*. Christopher Helm, London.
- BROWN, L.H., URBAN, E.K. & NEWMAN, K. (1982) *The Birds of Africa*, vol. 1. Academic Press, London.
- CHEKE, R.A. & WALSH, J.F. (1996) *The Birds of Togo*. Checklist 14, British Ornithologists' Union, Tring.
- 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.
- DOWSETT, R.J. & FORBES-WATSON, A.D. (1993) *Checklist of birds of the Afrotropical and Malagasy Regions. Vol. 1: Species Limits and Distributions*. Tauraco Press, Liège.
- DOWSETT-LEMAIRE, F., BORROW, N. & DOWSETT, R.J. (2005) *Cisticola dorsti* (Dorst's *Cisticola*) and *C. ruficeps guinea* are conspecific. *Bull. Brit. Orn. Club* 125: 305–313.
- ELGOOD, J.H., HEIGHAM, J.B., MOORE, A.M., NASON, A.N., SHARLAND, R.E. & SKINNER, N.J. (1994) *The Birds of Nigeria*. Checklist 4, 2nd ed., British Ornithologists' Union, Tring.
- GREEN, A.A. (1980). Two populations of cliff-chats in the Arli-Pendjari region. *Malimbus* 2: 99–101.
- GRIMES, L.G. 1987. *The Birds of Ghana*. Checklist 9, British Ornithologists' Union, London.
- HOLYOAK, D.T. & SEDDON, M.B. (1990) Distributional notes on the birds of Benin. *Malimbus* 11: 128–134.

- KAISER, A. (1993) A new multi-category classification of subcutaneous fat deposits of songbirds. *J. Field Orn.* 64: 246–255.
- KEITH, S., URBAN, E.K. & FRY, C.H. (1992) *The Birds of Africa*, vol. 4. Academic Press, London.
- SVENSSON, L. (1992) *Identification Guide to European Passerines*. Privately published, Stockholm.

Received 2 July 2006; revised 1 November 2006.

Volker Salewski<sup>1</sup> & Judith Korb<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Prinz-Rupprecht-Str. 34, 93053 Regensburg, Germany. <salewski@orn.mpg.de>

<sup>2</sup>Biologie I, Universität Regensburg, 93040 Regensburg, Germany.

### **Bird diversity in Nyassang Forest Park, The Gambia (*Malimbus* 28: 134–142): corrections and further information**

Following publication of my article on the birds of Nyassang (Ballantyne 2006), I have received a number of comments and questions on the records included. I therefore give the following additional information and (in some cases) corrections.

***Turtur tympanistria* Tambourine Dove.** This was a single record of a bird heard calling in atypical habitat for this species, and I now consider that it was probably a Black-billed Wood Dove *T. abyssinicus* or possibly a Blue-spotted Wood Dove *T. afer*. This record should therefore be omitted.

***T. afer* Blue-spotted Wood Dove.** The two records of this species were brief sightings and there remains a possibility of confusion with Black-billed Wood Dove, so these records require confirmation, although the species is known from Central River Division (T. Wachter pers. comm.).

***Ceyx picta* African Pygmy Kingfisher.** This species was noted in all habitats except the open water, while the similar Malachite Kingfisher *Corythornis cristata* was noted only twice, once in each rice field. The two were clearly distinguishable by crest and size of white cheek patch.

***Pyrrhurus scandens* Leaflove.** The single record of this species was based primarily on voice and, considering that there have been no records in the country since the early 1990s (C. Barlow pers. comm.), I now consider that it could have been a Blackcap Babbler *Turdoides reinwardtii*, which was common in the area, or perhaps a Stone Partridge *Ptilopachus petrosus*, which also has some similar calls (C. Barlow pers. comm.). This record should therefore be omitted.

***Ficedula hypoleuca* Pied Flycatcher.** Seen once in the disused rice field on 28 Aug 2005, which is a very early record of this species.

***Terpsiphone viridis* African Paradise Flycatcher.** “*Terpsiphone rufiventer* African Paradise Flycatcher” should have read “*Terpsiphone viridis* African Paradise Flycatcher”.