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Additions to the avifauna of Omo Forest Reserve, SW Nigeria

The Omo forest is one of the most important protected areas in southwestern Nigeria. The avifauna of the forest has been well surveyed by Green *et al.* (2007) and Olmos & Turshak (2009), and the latter described the biogeographical importance of the area and the conservation threats to it. A detailed map of the forest and the surrounding areas was provided by Green *et al.* (2007) who also described the main vegetation types.

In this note I provide three additions to the list of bird species recorded in the forest, with three other records that are also of interest. I spent two nights at J-4 (28–

29 Nov 2006) and three at Erin Camp (30 Nov to 2 Dec 2006) in the forest at the start of the dry season.

In total, 85 bird species were seen or heard, the majority of which had previously been recorded from the forest, and the frequency with which I encountered them was broadly in line with the results of others (Olmos & Turshak 2009). However, I found three species that appear not to have been recorded from the Omo forest before.

***Accipiter melanoleucus* Black Sparrowhawk.** A large black and white accipiter, black above and white below with broad black barring on the flanks, was flushed from a tree in a *Gmelina* plantation between J-4 and Omo Bridge on 30 Nov. The species is unmistakable and I am familiar with it from elsewhere in Africa. It was carrying a squirrel *Funisciurus* sp., which it had just caught. Elgood (1994) records this species as “not uncommon in lowland, montane and gallery forest from the coast north to the great rivers” so its occurrence at Omo is to be expected.

***Falco ardosiaceus* Grey Kestrel.** Single all-grey falcons with yellow ceres were seen perched on telegraph poles at J-4 on 29 and 30 Nov. There are no other falcons matching this description that occur in Nigeria. Elgood (1994) notes that this species is a “Not uncommon resident seasonally in farm and open land with trees north of the great rivers, less common in southwest ... Southerly records mainly dry season”. Presumably this species is not present at Omo throughout the year and these records represent dry season migrants.

***Telecanthura ussheri* Mottled Spinetail.** Two birds seen over J-4 on 29 Nov were identified as this species by comparison with the superficially similar Little Swift *Apus affinis* which were also present. The two birds were slightly larger with the distinctive “pinched” bases to the wings and longer, rounder, slightly hooked, wing tips. I first noticed them on account of their peculiar flight, more “fluttery” than the *Apus*, and then saw the pale patch on the lower belly which is diagnostic. I was looking out for this species as I had seen it in Lagos a few days before. Elgood (1994) reported that it is an “uncommon perhaps locally not uncommon residentWidespread from Lagos — 14 sightings Mar–June, Ikom 16 Apr and Calabar in the south, north to Yankari, Zaria and Kano” and noted that it is easily overlooked because of its similarity to Little Swift. Its occasional occurrence at Omo is therefore to be expected.

These three additions to the Omo forest list are all species associated with anthropogenic habitats, which have increased in the area in recent years. Their occurrence is consistent with the distributions within Nigeria as described in Elgood *et al.* (1994). Green *et al.* (2007) pointed out that open country species have been under-recorded in the area in the past because most observers have concentrated their efforts in the intact forests.

The following records are also worthy of note.

***Guttera pucherani* Crested Guineafowl.** A group of five north of Camp Erin on 1 Dec, and six on the access trail to Camp Erin on 2 Dec. This species was not recorded by Olmos & Turshak (2009) in extensive surveys less than a year after my observations and they imply that the species has been exterminated from the area as a

result of illegal hunting. As mentioned by them shotgun cartridges were easily found on the trails and shotguns were occasionally heard, particularly at night.

***Terpsiphone viridis* African Paradise Flycatcher.** A female seen on the Camp Erin nature trail on 1 and 3 Dec proved to be this species rather than Red-bellied Paradise Flycatcher *T. rufiventris*. Two birds were seen in degraded forest at Omo Bridge on 3 Dec; one was a white phase male.

***Platysteira cyanea* Common Wattle-eye.** A male was seen in a mixed feeding party on the trail into Camp Erin on 1 Dec.

The number of species usually associated with degraded forest or forest margins, which I saw deep in the forest close to Camp Erin, was notable, including these last two species. These may just be cases of dry season wandering, but perhaps reflect the slow encroachment of people into the forest, as mentioned by Olmos & Turshak (2009).

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Blue-breasted Kingfisher *Halcyon malimbica* feeding at sea

The Blue-breasted Kingfisher *Halcyon malimbica* is largely a bird of forest and dense woodland. It often occurs in riparian vegetation along streams and rivers, and ventures into coastal mangroves, but is not generally known to feed on the open coastline (Fry *et al.* 1988, Fry *et al.* 1992, Borrow & Demey 2001). Christy & Clark (1998) report