

Additions and corrections to the avifauna of Ebo Forest, Cameroon

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Summary

In the course of three weeks of field work in Ebo Forest (Cameroon) in January–February 2001, our observations included 75 species new to the list for the forest, and result in some corrections to the previously published list.

Résumé

Additions et corrections à l'avifaune de la Forêt d'Ebo, Cameroun. Lors de trois semaines de travail de terrain dans la forêt d'Ebo (Cameroun) en janvier–février 2001, nous avons observé 75 espèces supplémentaires et apportons quelques corrections à la liste publiée des oiseaux de la forêt.

Introduction

Whytock & Morgan (2010) published a list of the birds of the Ebo forest and surrounding farmland, based on their surveys, over a period of 12 weeks in 2008. They refer to our own work in the area (Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett 2001) by stating that we did just a “four-day assessment at a single locality in 2000” (Whytock & Morgan 2010, p. 23). This is incorrect, as is clear from our itinerary, map and gazetteer: we organized three expeditions into the forest, from Ndokmen Nord to Mt Kak in the north (7–15 Jan 2001), to the Ekem and Ebo rivers in the south (17–22 Jan 2001) and again in the north, from Logndeng to Békob (8–12 Feb 2001). This is a total of 18 days, to which we can add a couple of days travelling along the eastern edge of the forest on 2–4 Feb, as far as the village of Lognanga, where we camped (Fig. 1).

Whytock & Morgan (2010) also wrote (p. 23) that our list did not distinguish species recorded in Ebo from those found elsewhere in the region. This is again incorrect: for many species of local or rare occurrence, we gave exact localities within Ebo, and we meant that “common and widespread” species could be assumed to have been in Ebo as well as other prospected forests. More specifically, Whytock & Morgan (2010, p. 30) wrote that both Rachel's Malimbe *Malimbus racheliae* and

Red-bellied Malimbe *M. erythrogaster* had presumably been omitted from the “remarkably accurate” maps of Borrow & Demey (2004) for the region, because neither was observed by us. In fact, Borrow & Demey (2004) had simply not seen our report: we observed Red-bellied Malimbe near Mt Kak, inside Ebo, and Rachel’s Malimbe near the river Grand Nouya (Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett 2001, p. 37), a few km to the north of Ebo, this river taking its source in the Ebo forest.

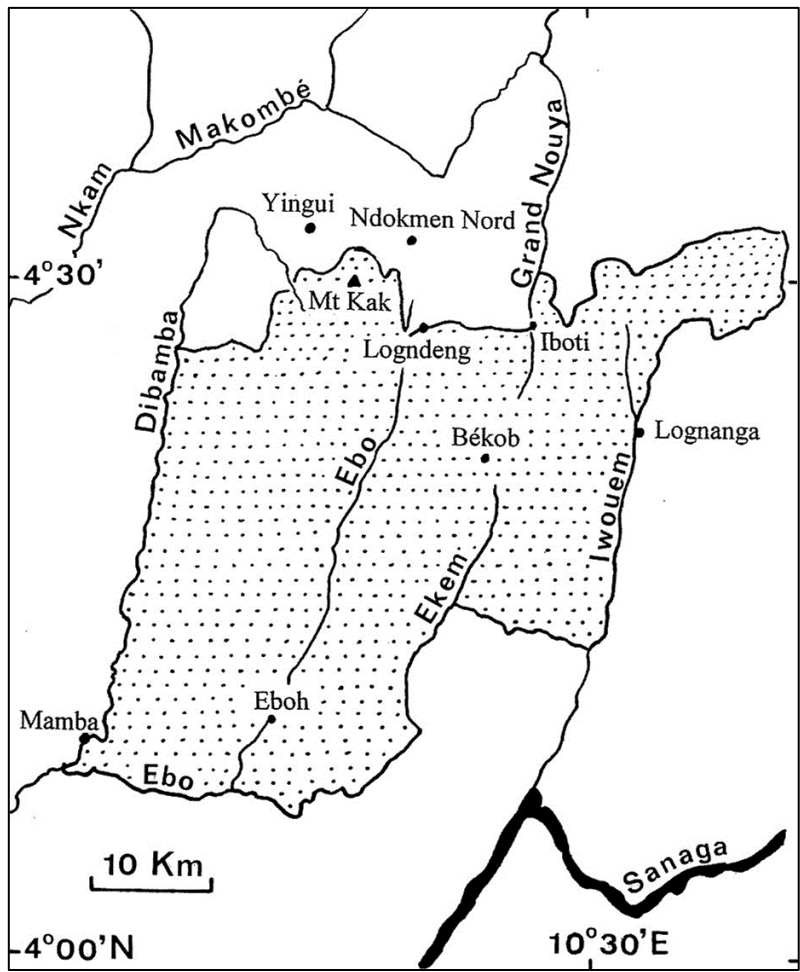


Figure 1. Map of the Ebo forest (stippled) showing rivers and main localities; adapted from the map in Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett (2001).

In 2000, the official size of Ebo forest (not given by Whytock & Morgan 2010) was 1417 km² and it was then proposed as a “Sanctuaire de Faune” (MINEF 2000). R. Whytock (*in litt.* 2011) informs us that most of this forest (1114 km²) has now been proposed as a National Park. The altitudinal range is 9–1207 m. Even though Whytock & Morgan (2010) do not define the boundaries of what they call Ebo forest, the rough outline in their Fig. 1 corresponds to that of the forest on our map, except perhaps for the far northeast corner (Fig. 1). Due probably to very shallow soils, Ebo forest is more markedly semi-evergreen than forests to the north and west. Most of the forest on hills has a low canopy with widely spaced emergents. Selective logging within Ebo was confined to the Ebo valley in the north, and more recently (2000 onwards) in the far south (Ekem confluence). A few small villages existed in the north, but they were all evacuated in 1959–60. Békob is the site of an abandoned village; Eboh in the south was in 2001 a recently established village of professional hunters, and the only village in the reserve. Further details on forest structure and vegetation can be found in Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett (2001).

Methods

Details of locations are taken directly from our report (Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett 2001). Corrections to species' names, and species already recorded by Whytock & Morgan (2010) but to which we gave a significantly different status or habitat, are given in []. For ease of reference we use the bird names of Borrow & Demey (2004), except for Collared Sunbird, as the genus *Hedydipna* is incorrect (Mann & Cheke 2006): the resurrected genus *Anthodiaeta* has not been defined in relation to the broader genus *Anthreptes*, so we prefer to retain Collared Sunbird in the latter. Abundance abbreviations (as defined in Whytock & Morgan 2010) follow the species names: A = Abundant, C = Common; F = Frequent; records of anything less than Frequent are uncoded and given in more detail. Habitat categories also follow Whytock & Morgan (2010) but their categories 4 and 7 are not used in the list below, and swamp forest (2) as used here is not necessarily dominated by *Raphia*. Their category 1 (“closed canopy secondary forest and *occasionally* primary forest at hill summits” our italics) suggests that most forest in Ebo is secondary. This is true around Békob, but not in most parts of the forest. For birds of aerial space (one raptor, swifts, one swallow), a category not recognized by Whytock & Morgan (2010), we give no number.

Results

We present below 75 additions and some corrections to the list of Whytock & Morgan (2010).

Phalacrocoracidae

Phalacrocorax africanus Long-tailed Cormorant. F, 6. A few on Ebo, Ekem and lower Iwouem rivers.

Anhinga rufa African Darter. 6. One on the Ekem River.

Ardeidae

Butorides striata Green-backed Heron. 6. One pair on the Ekem and lower Iwouem rivers.

Threskiornithidae

Bostrychia rara Spot-breasted Ibis. 2. One flushed from marshy stream, foothills of Mt Kak.

Anatidae

Pteronetta hartlaubi Hartlaub's Duck. 6. A pair on a stream at Ndokmen Nord, on the Ebo river (near Eboh village) and lower Iwouem.

Accipitridae

[*Accipiter tachiro* African Goshawk. C, 1. Whytock & Morgan (2010) classified this species as U; we consider this to be the commonest *Accipiter*, heard singing regularly at dawn. It is certainly more common than Black Sparrowhawk *A. melanoleucus*, which they classified as F.]

Hieraetus pennatus Booted Eagle. One (pale phase) at Eboh, 17 January.

Rallidae

Sarothrura pulchra White-spotted Flufftail. C, 1, 2. Almost throughout, on small or marshy streams and depressions.

S. elegans Buff-spotted Flufftail. 1. We heard this species outside Ebo, but the local hunters knew the voice well, as at Ndokmen Nord and Logndeng.

Heliornithidae

Podica senegalensis African Finfoot. F, 6. Seen on the Ebo river at Eboh, Ekem river and near Ndokmen Nord.

Glareolidae

Glareola nuchalis Rock Pratincole. 6. A dozen on the lower Iwouem river.

Scolopacidae

Actitis hypoleucos Common Sandpiper. C, 6. A few on all rivers.

Columbidae

Columba iriditorques Western Bronze-naped Pigeon. 1. One pair at Lognanga.

Aplopelia larvata Lemon Dove. 1. Found only on Mt Kak, one pair seen and another bird singing, at 850–950 m altitude.

Cuculidae

Chrysococcyx caprius Didric Cuckoo. 3. Heard at Logndeng and Lognanga.

Strigidae

Bubo poensis Fraser's Eagle Owl. 3. One heard at Lognanga.

B. leucostictus Akun Eagle Owl. 1. One heard and reacted to tape on slopes of Mt Kak.

Scotopelia bouvieri Vermiculated Fishing Owl. 2. One singing near Békob (in *Raphia* and mixed forest on a stream, 900 m altitude).

Glaucidium tephronotum Red-chested Owlet. 1. One singing on the slopes of Mt Kak.
G. sjostedti Sjöstedt's Owlet. C, 1. The common owl of the region in primary forest, up to three heard from one spot (e.g. Mt Kak).

Apodidae

Telacanthura melanopygia Black Spinetail. One pair over the Ebo river at Eboh, several around the Ekem river.

Neafrapus cassini Cassin's Spinetail. F. More widespread than Sabine's Spinetail *Rapidura sabini*, including Ebo forest (Békob) and the Ekem river.

Apus apus Common Swift. A. Large flocks seen throughout the region.

A. batesi Bates's Swift. A few around the Ekem river.

Trogonidae

Apaloderma aequatoriale Bare-cheeked Trogon. F, 1. Not "rare" as in Whytock & Morgan 2010), but met at all localities, in small numbers, sometimes two calling close to each other.]

Alcedinidae

Alcedo quadribrachys Shining Blue Kingfisher. F, 6. On various small streams and rivers (e.g. Ebo and Ekem).

A. leucogaster White-bellied Kingfisher. F, 1. Widespread, near small streams.

Megaceryle maxima Giant Kingfisher. F, 6. Widespread on large, rocky rivers (Ebo, Ekem, Iwouem).

Meropidae

Merops muelleri Blue-headed Bee-eater. 1. One pair, in small gaps in canopy, between Mamba and Eboh.

Coraciidae

[*Eurystomus gularis* is the correct name for Blue-throated Roller, not "*E. glaucurus*" as in Whytock & Morgan (2010).]

Bucerotidae

Tockus hartlaubi Black Dwarf Hornbill. 1. One pair with a juvenile between Mamba and Eboh, and one singing on the slopes of Mt Kak.

Lybiidae

Gymnobucco peli Bristle-nosed Barbet. 3. Some colonies at Lognanga.

Indicatoridae

Indicator maculatus Spotted Honeyguide. 1. One in song near Mt Kak, another on way from Logndeng to Békob.

I. conirostris Thick-billed Honeyguide. 1. One singing at foot of Mt Kak, another on way from Logndeng to Békob.

Picidae

Campethera cailliautii Green-backed Woodpecker. 1. One heard near Ndokmen Nord.

Dendropicos gabonensis Gabon Woodpecker. 3, 2. Single birds heard in secondary forest at Ndokmen Nord and Lognanga, and in open swamp forest at Békob.

Hirundinidae

Psalidoprocne nitens Square-tailed Saw-wing. One near Eboh.

[*P. pristoptera* Black Saw-wing. Unlike Whytock & Morgan (2010), we did not record this species in Ebo, but only in clearings at higher altitudes outside the area (Mt Nlonako, savannas of the Bafang Plateau north of Nkondjock). Whytock & Morgan (2010) placed this species in Habitat 1, but this swallow is unlikely to be in primary or old secondary forest.]

Hirundo nigrita White-throated Blue Swallow. 6. Small numbers on the Iwouem river.

Campephagidae

Campephaga phoenicea Red-shouldered Cuckoo-shrike. 3. Three in female plumage at Lognanga on 3 Feb, perhaps on passage.

C. quiscalina Purple-throated Cuckoo-shrike. 2. In open-canopy swamp forest near Békob (two pairs), thus much more local than Blue Cuckoo-shrike.

[*Coracina azurea* Blue Cuckoo-shrike. At least F, rather than “uncommon” as in Whytock & Morgan (2010).]

Pycnonotidae

Andropadus gracilis Little Grey Greenbul. 1, 2. Local in humid valley bottoms: a few at Békob (including swamp forest) and Eboh.

[*A. ansorgei* Ansorge’s Greenbul. C, 1. At all localities; not “uncommon” as in Whytock & Morgan (2010).]

Calypotocichla serina Golden Greenbul. F, 1. Widespread species of open canopy and edge of large rivers.

Baeopogon clamans Sjöstedt’s Honeyguide Greenbul. F, 1. Widespread in understorey of primary forest, especially near streams.

Turdidae

Sheppardia cyornithopsis Lowland Akalat. 1. This mid-altitude species was located once from its calls on the way from Logndeng to Békob (900–1000 m).

Cossypha cyanocampter Blue-shouldered Robin Chat. 5. One heard at Békob (in *Aframomum* and Marantaceae).

Sylviidae

Eremomela badiceps Rufous-crowned Eremomela. F, 1, 3. Békob.

Macrosphenus flavicans Yellow Longbill. F, 1. Present wherever there are thickets, although somewhat more localized than Grey Longbill *M. concolor*.

Phylloscopus sibilatrix Wood Warbler. 1. A few in open canopy, slopes of Mt Kak.

Hylia prasina Green Hylia. F, 1. Locally common at higher altitudes, or more humid areas: Ebo valley, Logndeng to Békob, Mt Kak.

Cisticolidae

Apalis nigriceps Black-capped Apalis. F, 1. Widespread, especially in open canopy.

A. rufogularis Buff-throated Apalis. C, 1, 3. Throughout.

Muscicapidae

[*Fraseria cinerascens* White-browed Forest Flycatcher. F, 1 with 6. Noted as “rare” by Whytock & Morgan (2010), but we found it in forest understorey along all major rivers (such as the Ebo and Ekem). Habitat 6 (streams and rivers) should be added, as the species depends on the proximity of watercourses.]

Muscicapa olivascens Olivaceous Flycatcher. U, 1. A few, up to 1100 m on Mt Kak.
M. cassini Cassin's Grey Flycatcher. F, 6. Forested banks of all large rivers, including the Ebo, Ekem and Iwouem.

M. epulata Little Grey Flycatcher. 1. One singing at Békob.

M. caerulescens Ashy Flycatcher. 3. One singing at Lognanga.

M. infusata Sooty Flycatcher. 3. Several family parties near Ndokmen Nord.

Platysteiridae

Bias musicus Black-and-white Flycatcher. 3. One pair at Logndeng (open forest).

Batis poensis Bioko Batis. F, 1, 3. A few heard in secondary forest near Logndeng and Lognanga and in open canopy on slopes of Mt Kak.

[*Dyaphorophya tonsa* White-spotted Wattle-eye. 1. One bird on slopes of Mt Kak. In Ebo (and elsewhere) this species is confined to subcanopy of primary forest, thus Whytock & Morgan's (2010) record in "low vegetation on basalt outcrops" (Habitat 7), is surprising.]

Monarchidae

Elminia nigromitrata Dusky Crested Flycatcher. F, 1. Forest understorey.

Remizidae

Pholidornis rushiae Tit-hylia. 1. Two birds in secondary forest at Békob (900 m).

Nectariniidae

Antheptes rectirostris Green Sunbird. C, 1. Widespread in open canopy.

[*A. collaris* Collared Sunbird. C, 1. Noted as "uncommon" by Whytock & Morgan (2010), but common throughout any forest.]

A. seimundi Little Green Sunbird. 3. One pair at forest edges at Eboh.

Cyanomitra oritis Cameroon Sunbird. 1. At least one heard on the mountain between Logndeng and Békob; probably heard on Mt Kak, above 1000 m.

Chalcomitra rubescens Green-throated Sunbird. F, 3. Forest edges at Lognanga and old secondary forest at Békob.

Cinnyris batesi Bates's Sunbird. F, 1. A few seen well on Mt Kak and near Békob, above 800 m.

C. chloropygius Olive-bellied Sunbird. C, 3. Throughout, in farmbush.

C. minullus Tiny Sunbird. F, 1. In secondary forest at Ndokmen Nord, at Békob and between Mamba and Eboh.

C. superbus Superb Sunbird. F, 3. A few at Ndokmen Nord and Lognanga.

Zosteropidae

Zosterops senegalensis Yellow White-eye. 1. One pair in old secondary forest at Békob, 900 m.

Malaconotidae

Dryoscopus senegalensis Black-shouldered Puffback. 1, 2. In open forest near water, Logndeng and Békob, one pair at each place.

D. sabini Sabine's Puffback. C, 1. Widespread in canopy of primary and secondary forest.

Laniarius leucorhynchus Sooty Boubou. 2, 3. In moist thickets at Ndokmen Nord and swamp forest at Békob, one pair duetting at each place.

Malaconotus multicolor Multi-coloured Bush Shrike. 1. One in forest canopy at Békob (900 m).

M. cruentus Fiery-breasted Bush Shrike. 2. Two pairs in open, swamp forest near Békob.

Oriolidae

[*Oriolus nigripennis* Black-winged Oriole. Although Whytock & Morgan (2010) list this species for Ebo, in our experience in western Cameroon north of the Sanaga it is not found at low or medium elevations, where Western Black-headed Oriole *O. brachyrhynchus* occurs, but replaces the latter at higher altitudes. We therefore feel its occurrence at Ebo requires confirmation. The nearest location where we have found this species was on the slopes of Mt Nlonako, above 1300 m (Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett 2001).]

Sturnidae

Poeoptera lugubris Narrow-tailed Starling. 3. A pair near a colony of *Gymnobucco* barbets, at Lognanga.

[*Lamprotorornis splendidus* is the correct name for Splendid Glossy Starling, not *L. "purpureus"* as in Whytock & Morgan (2010).]

Ploceidae

Ploceus albinucha Maxwell's Black Weaver. 1. Some in a bird party on Mt Kak (950 m).

Malimbus rubricollis Red-headed Malimbe. 1. One pair in open canopy at Békob.

Estrildidae

Mandingoa nitidula Green Twinspot. 3. A pair in an overgrown garden at Logndeng.

Discussion

Altogether we recorded some 212 species in three weeks. Our additions represent a substantial proportion of the forest avifauna. Many come from the Békob area where Whytock & Morgan (2010) had a base camp. Why these species, which were listed in Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett (2001), were overlooked in their paper is unclear. They recorded a few forest species additional to our list, as follows: White-crested Tiger Heron *Tigriornis leucolopha*, Red-chested Cuckoo *Cuculus solitarius* (although we doubt that this bird would qualify as "abundant", meaning around 11–100 seen or heard daily), Sandy Scops Owl *Otus icterorhynchus*, African Piculet *Sasia africana*, Shrike Flycatcher *Megabyas flammulatus* and Forest Chestnut-winged Starling *Onychognathus fulgidus*. It would be interesting to know where they recorded Banded Prinia *Prinia bairdii* and Black Saw-wing, as these birds of scrub and large forest clearings appear restricted to high altitudes in the region.

Whytock & Morgan (2010) mentioned a few more non-forest species, such as Intermediate Egret *Egretta intermedia*, African Fish Eagle *Haliaeetus vocifer*, Long-legged Pipit *Anthus pallidiventris* (for which no habitat was ticked in their Table 1) and Bronze Mannikin *Spermestes cucullata*. The Fish Eagle is listed under Habitat 3 (secondary forest and farmbush), which suggests it was a wanderer, as this is a species

of large rivers (perhaps originating from the larger Nkam river outside Ebo). The presence of the pipit and egret in the Ebo forest or even boundary villages is surprising as these species require very open habitats, but then Whytock & Morgan (2010) did not explain the boundaries of what they call Ebo forest. The proposed National Park is likely to exclude all villages (now on the boundary of the forest reserve) and some of the more degraded habitats; thus it seems premature to calculate or propose a total number of bird species for the area. Both Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett (2001) and the present paper include enough details on locations of observations for future reference, and it is likely that a number of species of farmbrush and villages listed by both Whytock & Morgan (2010) and Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett (2001) will be excluded once the boundaries of the proposed national park become known.

Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett (2001) also dealt with some important forests to the north of Ebo: Ndokbou (which is contiguous), Makombé (west of Ndokbou) and Mt Nlonako. Ndokbou and Makombé are included together with Ebo in Important Bird Area CM026 (Fishpool & Evans 2001). These two forests are now a 30-year logging concession certified by the Forest Stewardship Council (R. Whytock *in litt.* 2011).

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