



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.

If you want to print this pdf, we suggest you begin on the next page (2) to conserve paper.

**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.

Si vous souhaitez imprimer ce pdf, nous vous suggérons de commencer par la page suivante
(2) pour économiser du papier.

CASPIAN TERN FEEDING YOUNG IN WINTER QUARTERS - Juveniles of many terns (*Sterna* spp.) appear to have a long period of dependence and remain less efficient hunters than adults for some time following independence (Dunn, 1972, *Ibis* 114: 360-366). Ashmole & Tovar (1968, *Auk* 85: 90-100) observed six-month-old Royal Terns *Sterna maxima* being fed by adults in a wintering area but, in 65 hours of observation of Sandwich Terns *S. sandvicensis* in winter quarters in Sierra Leone, Dunn (*loc. cit.*) saw only a single instance of an immature begging from an older bird and that was unsuccessful. Little is known about the timing of independence in terns, nor about the relationships between parents and young during the transition to independence. In particular, it is not clear at what stage adults cease volunteering food to them, requiring the young to follow while soliciting (*cf.* Davies, 1976, *Behaviour* 59: 280-295) as the Sandwich Tern observed by Dunn was doing.

On 27 December 1982, near Freetown, Sierra Leone, I saw an adult Caspian Tern *S. caspia*, in winter plumage, flying with a fish in its beak from the direction of the sea towards a group of four Caspians, including one in immature dress, standing on a mudflat. The newcomer landed near the immature, which begged, lowering its head, pointing its beak towards the adult and calling. The adult walked a few paces towards the immature and passed the fish to it. The immature then swallowed the fish, which was about twice the length of its bill.

Caspian Terns are not known to breed in Sierra Leone, but are regular winter visitors, probably from colonies in Senegambia or Mauritania. These breed in July (e.g. Morel, 1980, *Liste commentee des oiseaux du Senegal et de la Gambie, Supplement 1*, ORSTOM, Dakar), so the immature was probably 5-6 months old. This incident suggests that, unlike Sandwich Terns (Dunn, *loc. cit.*), Caspian Terns of this age remain dependent on their parents, as the adult returned with a fish 'intended' for its young rather than having to be persuaded to feed it (*cf.* Davies *loc. cit.*).

Alan Tye

Dept. of Zoology, Fourah Bay College, University of Sierra Leone, Freetown, Sierra Leone

RED MANDIBLES IN THE WOODLAND KINGFISHER SUPERSPECIES - Adult Woodland Kingfishers *Halcyon senegalensis* have the upper mandible red and the lower mandible black; in very young birds both mandibles are dusky brown-black. D. B. Hanmer (*Safring News* 12, 1983, 11-14) figured several immature and adult birds which she netted at Nchalo, Malawi, with varying areas of red in their otherwise black lower mandibles. Nchalo is only 150 km from the nearest breeding locality in the coastal range of a closely-allied para-species, the Mangrove Kingfisher *H. senegaloides*, which has both mandibles solid red, and I ventured to suggest (*Safring News* 12, 1983, 14) that the aberrant Nchalo kingfishers might be hybrids between the two species. That notion is shared by Hanmer (*Safring News* 12, 1983, 15) and has been developed by her (*Safring News*, in press).

'In correspondence I was rash enough to state that, from memory, I had never noticed red patches on the lower mandible of *H. senegalensis* handled alive in several countries or as skins in several museums. Subsequently I have made a critical study, for *THE BIRDS OF AFRICA*, of the 266 skins of this species at the British Museum (Natural History), Tring, and I find that no fewer than 24, or 9%, have some red in the lower mandible.

In skins the red of the upper mandible rapidly fades to yellow-brown, and it is assumed that the same shade of yellow-brown in the lower mandible was red in life. M. Louette examined several hundred skins of *H. senegalensis* from Zaire (not the Tring ones) and found a few with a red or pale line on the cutting edges or gonyes of the lower mandible, but none with large patches of red like the Nchalo birds (Hanmer, *Safring News*, in press). In contrast, the aberrant Tring birds are from all parts of Africa (Gambia, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Ghana, Nigeria, Cameroon, Bioko, Sudan, Ethiopia, Uganda, Kenya, Angola, Namibia) including Lubumbashi, Ruwenzoris and Poko in south-east, east, and north-east Zaire, and they have 'red' patches up to 40% of the profile area of the lower mandible in extent.

Of the 24 red-mandibled specimens, 10 are unsexed, 11 male and 3 female. Most of those skins which are dated are over 75 years old, three over 110 years old; two are only 15 years old (from Mt Nimba, Liberia, one with 20% of the lower mandible reddish proximally and the other with red blotches covering 40% proximally), and the failure of the collector to comment on mandible colour (see Colston, *The birds of the Mt Nimba region in Liberia*, in press) suggests that 'red' discolouration may have appeared only *post mortem*. One striking correlation, however, is with age in life; of the 24 aberrant birds, 6 are fledglings or young juveniles, 11 immatures (breast buff-washed and finely dark-speckled), 3 immatures moulting into adult plumage, and 4 are adults (breast clear pale grey). They represent approximately 60%, 18% and 5% respectively of the Tring holdings of fledgling, immature and adult birds. In the 7 adult and sub-adult birds the extent and distribution of red is as follows: 3%, 3% and 20% ventro-proximally, 5% on gonyes, 10% in centre of profile (like adult 1a figured by Hanmer, *loc. cit.*, p 12), and 2 birds have long diagonal wedges of red (Figure 1). Some of the immature birds have similar wedges but most have the red restricted ventro-proximally.

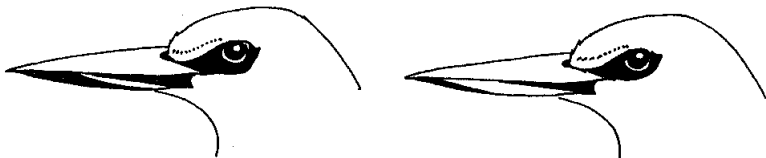


Figure 1

In summary, if lower mandible 'red' in *H. senegalensis* is not a *post mortem* artefact, it appears to be sex and age related, appearing mainly as large areas in young males, receding and in most cases vanishing at maturity.

This conclusion by no means invalidates the possibility of hybridization in regions where *H. senegalensis* approaches the essentially coastal-lowland range of *H. senegaloides*. Relationships between the two populations are of much interest and need to be studied in the field. Differences which have

seldom been remarked hitherto, are that *H. senegaloides* has a longer, broader bill than *H. senegalensis* but is smaller post-cranially, both in south-east Africa and in east Africa (*H. senegaloides* has a cline of markedly decreasing size from Natal, wing c. 106 mm, north to Kenya, wing c. 96 mm). In addition to the bill-colour difference, *H. senegaloides* has the greater under primary coverts black-tipped; in *H. senegalensis* they are white. The last character probably gives characteristically different appearances to the outstretched wings of each species during its territorial pivoting display (Greig-Smith, *Ostrich* 49, 1978, see pp. 71-72; Fry, *Ibis* 122, 1980, see p. 61 where the remark about *H. senegaloides* is incorrect). Ornithologists should be on the look-out particularly for field differences in displays and songs.

Finally, it may be remarked that the problem of lower mandible colour is not confined to *H. senegalensis*. Some museum specimens of *M. malimbicus* have 'red' in the lower mandible, which is normally all black, and one fledgling has an all-red bill (BMNH reg. no. 1911.12.23.3880, Principe Is., 2 Mar 1909).

C.H. Fry

Aberdeen University Zoology Dept., Tillydrone Avenue, Aberdeen AB9 2TN, UK

ADDITIONS TO LOCAL AVIFAUNAS: KANO STATE - The following species are additional to those previously reported for Kano State, Nigeria, by Sharland & Wilkinson (*Malimbus* 3, 1981: 7-30) and Wilkinson & Aidley (*Malimbus* 4, 1982: 107). For details of localities see Sharland & Wilkinson (op. cit.).

Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola* Two present on the shore of Tiga Lake from 15 to 27 January 1983, accompanied by a third individual on 21 January.

Dunlin *Calidris alpina* Also recorded from Tiga Lake; two on 14 January and three on 21 January 1983; at least one remained until 16 February.

Blue-breasted Kingfisher *Halcyon malimbica* Single birds at Falgore on 9 March, 19 March and 18 June 1983; all records were from the same riverine locality and may be of a single individual.

Blue-bellied Roller *Coracias cyanogaster* Single birds in different localities within Falgore Game Reserve on 18 August, 8 September and 20 October 1982, and on 16 January and 10 July 1983.

Rock-loving Cisticola *Cisticola aberrans* A singing male clearly seen on the inselbergs at Rano on 21 September 1980. We thank D. O'Connor for pointing out this omission from previous lists.

Violet-backed Sunbird *Anthreptes longuemarei* Three records from a river-side locality in Falgore; single males on 21 December 1982 and 9 March 1983, a pair on 2 February 1983.

R. Beecroft and R. Wilkinson

Hall Lane, Witlesham, Suffolk, UK and Dept. of Biological Sciences, Bayero University, PMB 3011, Kano, Nigeria