



**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.

THE AVIFAUNA OF TOPO ISLAND, NEAR LAGOS

J.A.Button

Topo Island is a long narrow strand  $\frac{1}{4}$  -  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles wide, separated from the mainland by a brackish-water lagoon of similar variability in breadth. The lagoon meets the sea at Lagos and Cotonou, Dahomey. The observations were made along a four-mile stretch from a point opposite the township of Badagry eastwards to Topo proper, an assemblage of now mainly disused buildings once occupied by nuns.

An extensive coconut palm plantation fringes the ocean side of the island, and a narrow belt of dense vegetation - reeds, bushes and small trees - extends along the lagoon side. The central strip consists of grassland, with *Borassus* and oil-palms, scattered thickets and several ponds surrounded by marshy ground during the rains which evaporate almost completely during the dry season.

The main interest of the area lies in the fact that here is a sizeable strip of essentially savannah environment extending East-West below the forest zone; a projection, in fact, of the Dahomey Savannah Gap. This is reflected in the rather peculiar avifauna, which differs in several respects from that of the adjacent area of mainland :

- (i) Savannah birds not hitherto encountered by the author on the mainland : *Streptopelia vinacea* the Vinaceous Turtle-Dove is quite common and appears to be breeding on Topo ( on 15th September 1961 an immature bird was seen being fed by an adult). *Cinnyricinclus leucogaster* the Amethyst Starling seen feeding young at a nest in the hollow top of a dead oil-palm stump, 24th June 1961.
- (ii) Birds encountered in derived savannah on the mainland but occurring more commonly on and characteristic of the Island : *Mirafra buckleyi* Buckley's Bush-Lark, *Macronyx croceus* the Yellow-throated Longclaw, *Laniarius barbarus* the Barbary Shrike, *Ptilostomus afer* the Black Magpie and *Cinnyris venustus* the Yellow-bellied Sunbird.
- (iii) Certain dry-season visitors notably *Bubulcus ibis* the Cattle Egret and *Budytes flavus* the Blue-headed Wagtail appear to remain later here than on the mainland. On 15th April 1962 a flock of at least 50 Egrets was seen, one of which had completely developed buff breeding plumes; at Ilaro, 45 miles to the North-East, Egrets have usually gone by the end of March. Again, on 15th April 1962 3 Wagtails were present; the latest date for Wagtails at Ilaro that year was 4th April. 4 *Milvus migrans* Black Kites were noted at Topo on 23rd June 1963, the last being seen at Ilaro on 1st May that year.
- (iv) Of forest birds, *Turtur afer* the Red-billed Wood-Dove, *Tchitreia smithii* Fagan's Paradise Flycatcher and others have been noted

along the lagoon edge or around the former nunnery grounds

The following list was compiled from observations made on eight visits to Topo Island between June 1961 and June 1963.

a = abundant; f = frequent; o = occasional; d = dry season (hence ad = abundant in dry season); ? or (?) queries status, not identification.

<i>Pyrrherodia purpurea</i>	Purple Heron	o
<i>Casmerodius albus</i>	African Great White Heron	o
<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>	Cattle Egret	cd
<i>Butorides striatus</i>	African Green-backed Heron	f
<i>Ixobrychus minutus</i>	Red-necked Little Bittern	f
<i>Milvus migrans</i>	West African Black Kite	df
<i>Kaupifalco monogrammicus</i>	Lizard Buzzard	f (?)
<i>Gypohierax angolensis</i>	Palm-Nut Vulture	o
<i>Accipiter badius</i>	Eritrean Shikra	?
<i>Francolinus bicalcaratus</i>	Double-spurred Francolin	c
<i>Limnocorax flavirostris</i>	Black Crake	f
<i>Actophilornis africanus</i>	Lily Trotter	f
<i>Stephanibyx lugubris</i>	Senegal Plover	f (?)
<i>Afroxyechus forbesi</i>	Forbes' Banded Plover	fd (?)
<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>	Common Sandpiper	f
<i>Glottis nebularius</i>	Greenshank	o
<i>Sterna hirundo</i>	Common Tern	o (?)
<i>Streptopelia semitorquata</i>	Red-eyed Turtle-Dove	f
<i>S. vinacea</i>	Vinaceous Turtle-Dove	c
<i>Stigmatopelia senegalensis</i>	Senegal Dove	c
<i>Turtur afer</i>	Red-billed Wood Dove	f
<i>Agapornis pullaria</i>	Red-headed Lovebird	o
<i>Centropus grillii</i>	Black-bellied Coucal	f
<i>C. senegalensis</i>	Senegal Coucal	c
<i>Cypsiurus paryus</i>	Palm Swift	c
<i>Collocalia affinis</i>	Little African Swift	f
<i>Eurystomus afer</i>	Broad-billed Roller	fd
<i>Ceryle rudis</i>	Pied Kingfisher	f
<i>Halcyon senegalensis</i>	Senegal Kingfisher	c
<i>Aerops albicollis</i>	White-throated Bee-eater	ad
<i>Lophoceros nasutus</i>	Grey Hornbill	o
<i>Mirafra buckleyi</i>	Buckley's Bush-Lark	c
<i>Budytes flavus</i>	Blue-headed Wagtail	fd
<i>Anthus leucophrys</i>	Plain-backed Pipit	f
<i>Macronyx croceus</i>	Yellow-throated Longclaw	a
<i>Hypergerus atriceps</i>	Oriole-Babbler	o
<i>Fycnonotus barbatus</i>	Common Bulbul	o
<i>Pyrrhurus flavicollis</i>	Yellow-throated Leaf-love	o
<i>P. simplex</i>	Simple Leaf-love	f
<i>Andropadus virens</i>	Little Green Bulbul	o
<i>Platysteira cyanea</i>	Scarlet-spectacled Flycatcher	o
<i>Turdus libonyanus</i>	Kurrichane Thrush	f
<i>Melocichla mentalis</i>	Moustached Scrub Warbler	f (?)
<i>Sylvietta flaviventris</i>	White-bellied Crombec	o
<i>Hirundo aethiopica</i>	Ethiopian Swallow	f
<i>H. leucosoma</i>	Pied-winged Swallow	o
<i>Laniarius barbarus</i>	Barbary Shrike	f
<i>Dryoscopus gambensis</i>	Gambian Puff-backed Shrike	o
<i>Tchagra australis</i>	Brown-crowned Tchagra	f
<i>Ptilostomus afer</i>	Black Magpie	c
<i>Cinnyricinclus leucogaster</i>	Amethyst Starling	o
<i>Lamprocolius chalcurus</i>	Short-tailed Glossy Starling	o
<i>Cinnyris cupreus</i>	Copper Sunbird	f
<i>C. coccinigaster</i>	Splendid Sunbird	o
<i>C. venustus</i>	Yellow-bellied Sunbird	c
<i>Chalcomitra fuliginosa</i>	Carmelite Sunbird	f
<i>Anthreptes collaris</i>	Collared Sunbird	o

Pachyphantos pachyrhynchus	Compact Weaver	o
Malimbus scutatus	Red-vented Weaver	c
Spermestes cucullatus	Bronze Mannikin	c
Lagonosticta senegala/rufopicta	Fire-finch sp.	c

TOPO AVIFAUNA : ADDENDUM

C.H.Fry

I have recorded the following species in the same area of Topo Island in addition to Button's list above, on 15th April and 2nd May 1962 :

Falco tinnunculus	Kestrel
F. ardosiaceus	Gray Kestrel
Centropus senegalensis epomidis	Rufous-bellied Coucal
Corythornis cristata	Malachite Kingfisher
Phyllanthus atripennis	Capuchin Tabbler
Vidua macroura	Pin-tailed Whydah
Estrilda (paludicola)	(Fawn-breasted) Waxbill

Discounting C. epomidis as a race of C. senegalensis, this gives a total of 67 species, distributed by habitat (Elgood 1964a, or for species not mentioned therein, Elgood 1964b) as follows :

Aquatic	...11	(Pyrherodia, Casmerodius, Butorides, Ixobrychus, Limnocorax, Actophilornis, Stephanibyx, Actitis, Glottis, Ceryle, Corythornis)
Coasts	... 1	(Chalcomitra fuliginosa).
Marine	... 1	(Sterna)
Widespread*	9	(Milvus, Stigmatopelia, Cypsiurus, Collocaltes, Halcyon, Acropus, Hypergerus, Pycnonotus, Vidua)
Forest	...11	(Kaupifalco, Gypohierax, Streptopelia semitorquata, Turtur, Pyrrhurus simplex, Andropadus, Sylvietta, Tchagra, Anthreptes, Malimbus, Phyllanthus)
Savannah	...34	(Remainder)

The savanna relations of Topo are reflected in a considerably higher proportion of savanna birds (51%) than at Ibadan (41%) where there is a forest/savanna interface fauna. At Topo there are only 16.5% forest birds, as compared with 36% at Ibadan (Table I).

	Ibadan		Topo	
	No. of species	%age	No. of species	%age
Aquatic	42	16	11	16.5
Coastal	0	0	1	1.5
Marine	0	0	1	1.5
Widespread	19	7	9	12
Forest	96	36	11	16.5
Savannah	109	41	34	51

Table I.

Particular attention may be drawn to the record of Estrilda (paludicola), small flocks of which were seen in reeds in the lagoon side of Topo on both my visits. Field description taken at the time corresponds with Bannerman and with B.M. skins, except that the bill was red, not horn-coloured. Specimens require collection, as this