



**West African Ornithological Society
Société d'Ornithologie de l'Ouest
Africain**



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join its mate which was somewhat playfully harrying a Red-tailed Buzzard Buteo auguralis. The falcons broke off this engagement and commenced planing on thermal currents, at a height of approximately 300 ft.

Meanwhile a pair of Pied Crows Corvus albus appeared flying at approximately 25 ft. above the ground, and calling loudly; they were two or three hundred yards from the presumed Lanner nest, and oblivious of the falcons nearby. One of the falcons immediately stooped upon one of the crows, at fantastic speed, hitting it a glancing blow. The crow fell to earth and the falcon pulled out of its dive, gained height and flew off. Thinking the crow to be cowering in fright we went over to see if it was injured and found it to be dead, with blood seeping from the bill. Subsequent examination showed the thoracic cavity to be filled with blood, and a discolouration in the occipital region of the skull. We concluded that the crow had been concussed by an original blow to the head, the thoracic haemorrhage and death resulting from impact with the ground. None of us had ever witnessed such a display of savagery.

D. Ebbutt

Extension of Range of the Fire-crested Alethe. In May 1964 I netted a Fire-crested Alethe Alethe castanea in Gambari Forest Reserve, Ibadan. The bird is known from Benin Division, but this is the first record of the race so far West.

pp J.H. Elgood

The Coot : a New Nigerian Bird. On 14th January 1963 I had a distant view of a Coot Fulica sp. at the far side of a 200-yd. wide flood lake at Mallam'faturi, on the shore of Lake Chad a few miles from the Yobe outfall. I would like to have been nearer to try to make a specific identification, but the generic characters noted were : an all-black wigeon-sized bird, riding rather high on open water some yards from a reed-bed, with rather small head and conspicuous white forehead shield. This could have been the Crested Coot F. cristata, which is a non-migratory bird distributed over the whole of S. and E. Africa and Madagascar with a relic population in S. Spain and Algeria (Voous, K. Atlas of European Birds, 1960), but is far more likely to have been the partial migrant F. atra of Europe. This winters (inter alia) in the Sudan North of Khartoum, and was recorded for the first time in West Africa in Senegal by Morel & Roux (Donnees nouvelles sur l'Avifaune du Senegal, l'Oiseau 1962 : 32). In any case there are grounds for regarding the two forms as conspecific.

C.H. Fry

The Ortolan Bunting : a New Nigerian Bird. A fine Ortolan Bunting Emberiza hortulana was watched at close range in excellent light by C.H.F. and C. Wood-Robinson at 0930 hrs on 25th December 1963 on Kufena Rock, Zaria. The bird was active and approachable, and

perching on low shrubs and steep rock faces. The head was pale green or apple-olive, with a conspicuous pale yellow moustachial stripe bordering the pale green throat; whitish eye-ring; breast yellowish, clearly demarcated from tawny or pale rusty belly; mantle, back, wings and tail of typical *Emberiza* pattern; white outer-tail feathers; rump colour not recorded; bill, legs and feet pinkish. No voice heard.

Early in the morning of 24th March 1964 an Ortolan Bunting was caught by V.W.S. in a permanently-sited mist-net in his garden at Vom. It was weighed, measured, ringed and photographed, and inspected by D. Ebbutt before release. The following morning, 25th March, another Ortolan was netted in the same place. Weighings and measurements showed this to be certainly another individual, not the previous morning's bird whose ring might have fallen off! This too was ringed and released. The several colour transparencies made are fortunately excellent and confirm the identity beyond doubt.

We know of no occurrences of this Palaearctic migrant in West Africa apart from two females taken near Richard-Toll, Senegal on 6th October 1958 and 29th April 1961 (Morel & Roux, *Donnees nouvelles sur l'Avifaune du Senegal*, *l'Oiseau* 1962 : 32) and the three instances cited above. C.H.Fry and V.W.Smith .

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

Marsh Owl

I would be pleased to hear any information members may have on the breeding and distribution of the Marsh Owl in Nigerian localities other than the Plateau - Sokoto or Lake Chad areas particularly. V.W.Smith