



**West African Ornithological Society
Société d'Ornithologie de l'Ouest
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J.H.Elgood

The Editor has suggested that I should follow up the Provisional Check List which appeared in the first number of the Bulletin with some information on those species not listed in Bannerman, but included by myself in the Nigerian avifauna. This may take some time to complete but it was thought, that a start might be made with the only new species, the Ibadan Malimbo, Malimbus ibadanensis, Elgood, 1958, first described in Ibis, 100: pp 621-624. Some of what follows is a direct transcription from the paper which may not have been seen by members of the Society. Other information is new and will be presented here for the first time.

A pair of malimbos was encountered on 18th December, 1951 in the grounds of the University of Ibadan that did not conform with any species described by Bannerman. The species was subsequently encountered many times in the area, usually a pair together with the male a most conspicuous bird because of the large area of scarlet-red on head and breast. It was not until early 1958, however, that specimens were collected, by which time it was pretty certain that a new species was involved.

Description of Plumage

The Male - Forehead, crown, neck and lower-part of the throat crimson-scarlet, becoming scarlet on the breast and orange-red on the upper belly; lores, eyelids, ear coverts, malar region, chin, upper part of the throat and the whole of the rest of the plumage black. A few black feathers occur amongst the red of the upper-belly, and some red feathers occur within the black area of the lower belly, thighs, vent and under tail-coverts. Eye dark blue-black; bill black; legs and feet dark brown-black. Wing 88-99mm: Tail 52-56mm: Culmen 21-23mm: (8 specimens measured).

The Female - Differs from the male in having much less red on the under-parts and this is more orange-red than crimson throughout. The extent of the red on the breast (about 2 cms. wide) may be described as a broad collar. Soft parts as in the male. Wing 85-90mm: Tail 50-54mm: Culmen 20-22mm (9 specimens measured).



Care must be taken to distinguish this species in the field from the other malimbos that occur in Nigeria. The male differs from other malimbos in the extent of the area of red on the under-side which is much greater than any other species except M. erythrogaster where the red extends even further to include the area of the vent and under-tail coverts. This species is not known from Western Nigeria and so far ibadanensis has not been recognised beyond the western areas of the Western Region. The female of ibadanensis, seen by itself, is a little more tricky since it can be confused with the male of scutatus or with malimbicus. The absence of red feathers in the area of the vent, however, at once distinguishes it from scutatus, and the presence of a black facial mask, in particular the black chin and upper throat distinguishes it from malimbicus. It is almost certain that Sir Hugo Marshall first saw this new bird at Ibadan and mistook it for the male of cassini (the female of which is entirely black) and this accounts for Bannerman's mention of cassini at Ibadan. It is probable that cassini does not enter Nigeria at all, since Serle does not admit it as a bird of Eastern Nigeria.

The careful observer, however, should have no difficulty in recognising M. ibadanensis particularly as male and female are so often seen together.

Habitat

M. ibadanensis seems to be a bird of the forest edge and to be seen more often in farmland and gardens than in forest proper. When observed in forest, it is usually seen where the forest is disturbed, through timber extraction, or along a road. It shuns the inside of the forest where nitens and malimbicus are most often encountered. It is sometimes seen associating with rubricollis and has been seen alongside scutatus, both of which species can occur outside the true forest.

Known range

Until recently this species was only known from the area around Ibadan, between the Ogun and Oshun Rivers and more or less along the line of the forest edge. Earlier this year, however, J.A. Button who had seen these birds in the field at Ibadan, and studied the skins in my collection, has reliably reported the species from Ilaro. This represents an extension of the known range by about 45 miles to the south west. It would seem likely that the species actually ranges from the Dahomey gap eastward along the much dissected forest edge, possibly as far east as the Niger. It has been suggested that ibadanensis is a westerly form of erythrogaster though my only encounters with the latter have been right under the forest canopy at Mamu Forest Reserve, a situation that seems contrary to all observations of ibadanensis.

Behavioural Notes

Usually seen in pairs, sometimes solitary, sometimes in small parties (up to 5 birds). Often associates with rubricollis, rarely with scutatus;

never seen with any other malimbe.

The flight is weak and rather jerky, and birds often call in flight.

The voice is rather like that of rubricollis, and thus very different from that of nitens or of soutatus (I do not know the voice of the much less common malimbicus). The most characteristic phrase may be written "choop-eee-wurr" followed by a characteristic weaver wheeze, the whole repeated at intervals. This call is made by the male near the nest.

Breeding

Some data on breeding were obtained in Ibadan in the rainy season of 1962. The nest is of the "inverted-sock type", made largely of strands from leaves of oil-palms. Two adjacent nests were constructed in June, the first utilised right away for a first brood and the second, completed by the male while the female was incubating in the first, but not used till October. Both broods, thought to be 6/2, were successfully fledged. The nests were in the lowest branch of a large Albizia tree at about 30ft from the ground. It was unlikely to be accidental that a wasp nest (Belonogaster) was not more than 3ft away. The nests were impossible to approach and it was thought that some general breeding data, such as quoted here, would be of more value at this stage than an account of the eggs, which could only have been obtained by lopping down the suspending branch of the tree.

It is greatly to be hoped that members of N.O.S. stationed in the southern regions of Nigeria will keep a sharp look out for this species. Any new information will be gratefully received (and acknowledge in any subsequent publication) by the writer.

PROVISIONAL CHECK-LIST OF THE BIRDS OF PLATEAU PROVINCE

OVER 3,000 FEET

D. Ebbutt, M.T.Horwood, R.E.Sharland & V.W.Smith *

This check-list covers the area over 3,000 ft. and not the whole of Plateau Province for two reasons; two of us (D.E. and V.W.S.) have very limited knowledge of the Lowlands division below 3,000 ft., and the area above 3,000 ft. offers an unusual ecological zone. Grassland and rocky hills predominate, there is a considerable amount of permanent water (mainly dams) and the orchard bush (which at one time covered most of the Plateau) is now mainly restricted to fringes along the escarpment.

The wet season extends mainly from April to September (with storms in some years from mid-March to early November). The

* Final draft not seen by M.T.H.