



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

Owing to the necessity of your Editor proceeding on leave rather earlier than anticipated, this second Bulletin appears a fortnight earlier than previously indicated. Apologies are extended to any contributors whose work has been excluded from this issue due to not arriving to date; any such contributions will appear in the next issue, to appear in mid-October. Other contributions to Bulletin No. 3 should arrive by 31st September.

The Editor has received congratulatory messages from several members on the issue of the first Bulletin, but clearly if that issue is to be considered a success, this is a direct result of the efforts of contributors, all of whom are to be sincerely thanked.

Subscriptions : until further notice, will members kindly make cheques and postal orders payable to Mr Fry and not to the Society. Not yet being properly constituted, we have no Bank account, a position which will be rectified in due course when the Society's worth is proven. The Treasurer will give a brief statement of Income and Expenditure with the first 1965 Bulletin.

Leave : if members wish to have Bulletins sent to their home addresses when on leave, will they please indicate their leave addresses and dates to me in good time.

Editorial address until 14th August : 34, Seacroft Esplanade, Skegness, Lincs, U.K. Thereafter not available until mid-September, when I return

CIRCULATION LIST

/ to Zaria.

- *Boulter, H., Okungwo Memorial Grammar School, Knewl, Onitsha
- *Brotherton, Major J.G.H., W.L.I.T.R., P.M.B. 2077, Kaduna
- *Brotherton, Mrs J.G.H. "
- *Button, J.A., Egbado College, Ilaro
- Condon, D. c/o British Information Services, Lagos
- Crane, N. Provincial Secondary School, Kano
- *Ebbutt, D., Government Technical Training Centre, Bukuru
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- Mann, Rev M., Christ Church, Fort Harcourt
- *Musgrove, H., Bank of West Africa, Jos
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- Thomson, Dr K.B., Medical Department, Kaduna
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- *Watson, H.J.C., W.L.I.T.R., P.M.B. 2077, Kaduna

THE MARSH OWL, *ASIO CAPENSIS* ON THE JOS PLATEAU

V.W.Smith

The Marsh Owl *Asio capensis* is relatively common in certain areas of the Plateau, particularly where the open grassland in the more level areas becomes saturated with water during the wet season (April to October). During this period, when the birds are not breeding, they may be found in ones and twos wherever the habitat is suitable; rocky outcrops and hilly areas do not attract them, nor do forest reserves. When flushed from the grass they do not fly far and may circle inquisitively, when the dark brown eyes in a pale well-marked facial disc are readily noticeable. Another feature worthy of note is the pale patch on the wings, formed by the pale basal portion of the outer primaries, which shows as the bird circles in flight. Once the bird settles in the grass it is difficult to flush again without the aid of a dog.

As the grassland dries up at the beginning of the dry season, the birds tend to congregate in the lower-lying swampy areas which persist in some cases until the end of the year; even when they dry out completely, the deep holes and grass provide cover and shade for roosting during the day, and it is during the period at the end of the dry season that greatest concentrations of these birds occur in this type of locality. It is difficult to say whether there is any local migration; it is more likely that during the wet season they are dispersed in the same area and are less likely to be seen.

Rodents form the main diet, varying in size from large rats, five or six inches long, to mere morsels an inch long, but insects (locusts) are included. Hunting appears to be carried out from some vantage point rather than in flight; the parapets of roadside culverts (watching for rodents crossing the road), a shrubby bush, guinea-corn stalk, or pile of atcha straw are all favoured sites.

Breeding commences at the end of the wet season and takes place when all the swamps are at their fullest. At this time of year these swamps are very treacherous places indeed, with the tall grass and weeds concealing water-filled holes two or three feet deep. On the other hand the surrounding grassland has begun to dry out, the adjacent grain crops are being harvested, and the rodents attracted to the spilt grain are more easily caught when the ground cover becomes less abundant.

Birds pair off during September and October, and large swamps may hold several pairs. Territories are well-defined in the swamps themselves, though each territory has access to the perimeter of the swamp and the hunting area beyond. Display flights seen at dusk or on moonlit nights take the form of long flights in wide circles, with deliberate wing-beats and periodic clapping of the wings. Pairs chase each other,

occasionally flying up to meet each other feet to feet. The normal call, heard most frequently during the breeding season, is a croaking 'Kaaa' uttered in flight or on the ground (when the similarity to the croak of a frog is most marked). During aerial chases the call may be repeated several times in quick succession.

The nest is well concealed in rank herbage in these swamps; usually a slight pad of vegetable matter is placed in the heart of a dry tussock of old grass or weeds, and the white eggs are not visible from above. Where patches of tall dense grass (so typically seen in these swamps) have been flattened, the nest is sometimes placed beneath, as long as there is a firm dry foundation, and in one case there was an entrance 'tunnel' almost three feet long leading to the nest itself.

Eggs when fresh are chalky white, though later they become stained with vegetable juices; they measure approximately 41 x 35 mm. Nests containing eggs have been seen between 1st October (the first egg of a subsequent clutch of four) and 12th January (although this last record was probably a replacement clutch, being within a few yards of a nest found in early November and subsequently deserted). Most nests with eggs have been seen during October and November. Of five nests found, two had clutches of three eggs, two of four and one of six. Eggs are laid at two-day intervals, and hatch accordingly, and the incubation period is about four weeks. The newly hatched young are covered with a pale fawn down, and the eyes remain closed for six to eight days. The young spend two or three weeks in the nest, and are probably fed nearby for a further two or three weeks. Young have been found out of the nest as early as 15th December, and this was a young bird estimated to be five or six weeks old, with abundant food laid beside it and scarcely able to fly more than a few yards. On this evidence it is clear that the main breeding season in this area is October to December. Adults with well-incubated eggs or newly-hatched young carry out a very vigorous form of distraction display. They fly around in tight circles and then literally fling themselves to the ground uttering a squealing cry, and behaviour like this is a sure indication that there is a nest in the vicinity.

The young in the nest utter a husky 'Queeep', which becomes more of a musical 'Too-eee' when they leave the nest, and this can be heard at a considerable distance.

The local race is A.c. tingitanus, more reddish than the A.c. capensis of East and South Africa, and closely resembling the race found in the Sudan, North Africa and southern Spain.

Reference

- Smith, V.W. & Killick-Kendrick, R. (1964) Notes on the breeding of the Marsh Owl Asio capensis in Northern Nigeria. *Ibis* 106 : 119-123

TWO INTERESTING PLATEAU BIRDS

The Red-Capped Lark Calandrella cinerea and the Three-Banded Plover
Afroxyechus tricollaris

R. E. Sharland

On 8th October 1958 whilst travelling from Laminga to Bukuru on the Jos Plateau, my wife and I noticed a small lark on the road. The bird had a pale red head and a rusty patch on either side of the breast. After a long chase I eventually secured it and sent it to the British Museum for identification. It was identified as the Red-Capped Lark Calandrella cinerea natoriator.

This lark has a wide range in South Africa but according to R.E. Moreau (pers. comm.) has not been recorded previously in West Africa north of Eastern Congo or South-Western Kasai.

As Roberts (1) describes the Red-Capped Lark as a restless bird I thought that the Jos birds were probably migrants from further South. When I returned from leave I revisited the Laminga area and on 3rd July found a pair in the same area. It seems likely therefore that the bird is resident*.

Several pairs or single birds were seen altogether in the winter of 1958 either in the Laminga area or near Sabon Gida Reservoir. Three were caught flying to drink on Tollemache Dam and were ringed and released. I would be interested to hear any reports of the bird in other areas and any evidence of nesting*.

In August 1952 I noticed three small plovers on a mining dam near Jos and shot one of them. It turned out to be a Three-Banded Plover Afroxyechus tricollaris which is found in South and East Africa. Ten years later in August 1962 Mr R.G. Newell secured another Three-Banded Plover in the same area - about 12 miles from Jos on the Bauchi road.

This bird is very similar to Forbes' Banded Plover Afroxyechus forbesi, a widespread and locally common bird in Nigeria, but differs in having a white forehead and paler throat. The only previous West African records of A. tricollaris are from Marua, N. Cameroon, in 1922 and Accra in 1945.

Reference

- (1) Roberts, A. The Birds of South Africa. 1940

* Juvenile birds have now been found on the Plateau; it is hoped that a note on this occurrence will follow. -Ed.

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>Fringilla 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	c
<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, Acrocephalus, 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

might afford an interesting extension in range of a species known in West Africa only from the Ananbra Creek, Onithsa (Bannerman).

References

- Bannerman, D.: The Birds of West and Equatorial Africa
 Elgood, J.H. & Sibley, F.C. (1964a) The tropical forest edge avifauna of Ibadan, Nigeria. *Ibis* 106 : 221-248
 Elgood, J.H. (1964b) Provisional Check-list of the birds of Nigeria. *Bull. Nig. Orn. Soc.* 1 : 13-25.

* "Widespread" of Elgood 1964b is here equated with "Indifferent" of Elgood & Sibley 1964a. Habitat assessments in these two papers are similar, except that Streptopelia semitorquata (Indif.) and Hypergerus atriceps (For.) of Elgood & Sibley are respectively Forest and Widespread in Elgood 1964b. The latter assessment is used here.

NOTES ON THE STATUS OF THE PYCNONOTIDAE AT ILARO

J.A. Button

The Ilaro with its secondary growth of varying density and maturity is excellent bulbul country. Of the twenty-six species of Pycnonotidae given in Elgood (1964), thirteen have been observed at Ilaro - eleven in the grounds of Egbado College.

An attempt has been made to estimate the relative numbers of those species which appear to be resident in the area by comparison with Pycnonotus barbatus the Common Bulbul, the most conspicuous species, which is arbitrarily given an abundance grade of 10. This indicates about 20 individual birds seen or heard during an average morning's birding over an area of about 1 sq. mile.

Four species, Bleda canicapilla Grey-headed Bristle-bill, Thescelocichla leucopleura Swamp Bulbul, Baeopogon indicator White-tailed Greenbul and Phyllastrephus baumanni Baumann's Greenbul have been selected for tabular comparison of abundance, habitat and behaviour.

The mist-netting figures represent results obtained between September 1962 and April 1964; the status figures are based on observations made regularly over the same period : at best they can only be general approximations.

Pycnonotus barbatus and Andropadus virens, both given a status of 10, have netting figures of 6 and 33 respectively. This great difference is due to the fact that A. virens is eminently 'nettable' and prefers the rather thick growth where the nets are usually placed. P. barbatus likes a more open environment; it also seems adept at avoiding the net even when it frequents thick secondary bush. In this respect it is unlike Pyrrhurus simplex.

I should like to thank Prof. J.H. Elgood for his help in identifying some of these birds in respect of both plumage and voice.

cont./

	<u>Status</u>	<u>Netted</u>	<u>Notes</u>
<i>Pycnonotus barbatus</i>	10	6	Farm & parkland; new bush
<i>Trichophorus barbatus</i>) No records	1,	Ipake Forest Res.; dense mature growth
<i>Trichophorus calurus</i>) Egbado College		Seen once Ipake Forest Res.
<i>Bleda canicapilla</i>	3	5	Dense secondary & mature growth
<i>Thescelocichla leucopleura</i>	occasional		Status 2 at Ipake.
<i>Pyrrhurus simplex</i>	5	11	New secondary growth
<i>Baeopogon indicator</i>	2		Secondary growth, trees
<i>Phyllastrephus baumanni</i>	4	5	Secondary growth & parkland
<i>Phyllastrephus albigularis</i>	1 (?)	4	Skulks in dense new and mature growth
<i>Andropadus curvirostris</i>	6	18	Skulks in new and mature growth
<i>Andropadus gracilis</i>	occasional	1	New secondary growth & parkland
<i>Andropadus latirostris</i>	5	12	Matured secondary growth
<i>Andropadus virens</i>	10	33	New and matured second. growth

i. The Ilaro *Pycnonotidae*

	<i>Bleda canicapilla</i>	<i>Thescelocichla leucopleura</i>	<i>Baeopogon indicator</i>	<i>Phyllastrephus baumanni</i>
Status and estimate of relative nos. Ilaro (<i>Pycno. barbatus</i> = 10)	Frequent 3	Occasional Egbado Coll. 2 Ipake Forest	frequent 2	Fairly common
Netting	5	Nil. Habitat apparently too high & open	Nil. Usually too high for netting	5
General habitat	Dense new and matured secondary growth	Well-matured forest with streams and usually <i>Raphia</i> palms	Secondary bush with high trees	Secondary bush and parkland with high trees
Vertical niche	2 - 8 ft. from ground; barer branches at lower levels	20 - 50 ft. ; middle storey of trees	Canopies of large trees	Tops of trees and lower growth 10 - 70 ft. high.
Voice	Excited 'Chityu, chityu, chityu, wirra, wirra' often at dusk	Hoarse human chatter, like 'Watcher Christopher!' etc. etc.	Oriole-loke 'Piddle-chow'.	Thrush-like 'Seer, seer' sometimes with a few guttural notes
Typical behaviour	Frenzied chases thro' barer levels of lower bush. Cf <i>Pycnonotus barbatus</i> .	Often in groups of 4-5 working thro' Ipake For. Never more than a pair at Egbado Coll.	Groups of 4-7 seen regularly same trees. Excited chases at canopy level. Occasionally seen lower levels in 'bird army'.	Perching or moving quietly topmost levels; often in groups of 3-5.
Field identification	Brown with bright yellow breast & belly	Voice; a brownish bird with white corners to tail.	Brown bird; white outer tail feathers.	nondescript brown with long rusty tail. By voice and behaviour

ii. Comparison of 4 Selected Species

NEOCOSSYPHUS AND STIZORHINA AND THE RELATIONSHIP OF THRUSHES WITH
FLYCATCHERS

C.H. Fry

The Ethiopian genera Neocossyphus and Stizorhina are thrush-like forest birds each with two species, of which N. poensis¹ closely resembles S. finschi², and N. rufus³ even more closely resembles S. fraseri⁴. Bannerman (1953) followed the almost invariable practice until that time of putting Neocossyphus in the Turdidae (thrushes) and Stizorhina in the Muscicapidae (flycatchers), presumably on the grounds (although this is not stated) that Stizorhina is flycatcher-like by habit, and has the broad bill and short metatarsi typical of flycatchers. Chapin recognises the close affinity of the two genera by placing them in sequence within the Turdidae (Bds. of the Belgian Congo, 1953).

It is widely recognised of course that the thrushes, flycatchers and warblers are a closely-related assemblage of passerine birds, and it appears to be common practice at the present time to unite them in a single family, the Muscicapidae. Hence Vaurie (1959) gives the Muscicapidae two subsidiary and four main subfamilies (Turdinae, Muscicapinae, Sylviinae (warblers) and Timaliinae (babblers)), and White (1962) also treats the Turdinae as a subfamily of the Muscicapidae sens. lat. The latter author regards the African Turdinae as comprising six groups, to which he gives colloquial but not taxonomic names. One of these is the African Robins with 10 genera including Cossypha, Neocossyphus and Stizorhina.

Both N. poensis and S. finschi are of frequent occurrence in mature forest reserves in Western Region (Button; Fry; Bull. Nig. Orn. Soc. 1) and I have noted one or both species at Ipake, Olokemeji, Gambari and Idanre. Difficult as these shy forest species are to observe, I had accumulated some field notes on both, although some confusion as to identification existed, when I netted N. poensis at Ipake on 17th February 1962 and S. finschi, also at Ipake, on 28th April 1962. Identity was confirmed by the British Museum, to whom my thanks are due, and both skins were deposited in the University of Ibadan collection. I was greatly impressed by the similarity of the two species, which are orange below with brown head, back and tail, an almost identical pattern of white in the outer tail feathers (fig. 1), orange bases to the primaries and secondaries, and flesh-coloured legs and feet. The plumage differs mainly in that the 'thrush' is slate above and the 'flycatcher' dark olive brown with a dark chestnut rump. Both birds have rictal bristles and a thrush-like bill, but the bristles are longer and the bill shorter and wider in Stizorhina. The foot and leg is much weaker in Stizorhina.

1. White-tailed Ant-Thrush 2. Finsch's Rushty Flycatcher 3. Red-tailed Ant-Thrush 4. Fraser's Rusty Flycatcher .

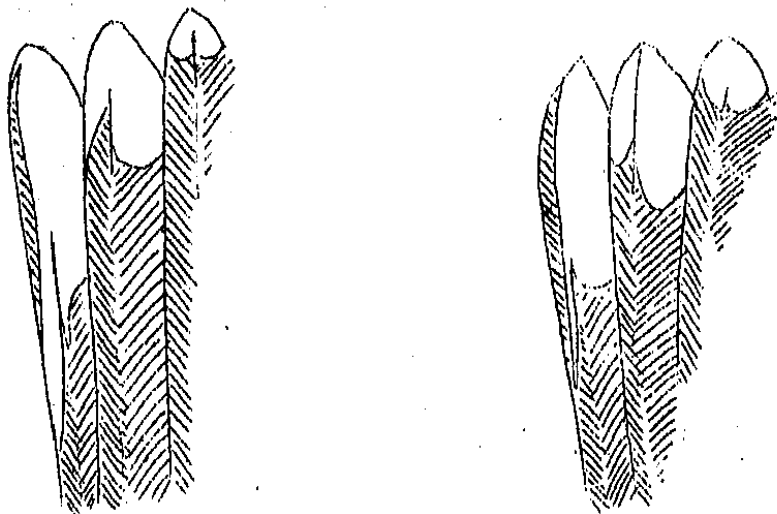


fig. 1. Outer tail pattern of Neocossyphus poensis (left) and Stizorhina finschi.

Examination of skins in the British Museum shows that N. rufus and S. fraseri are even more similar to each other than the preceding two species; virtually the only differences between rufus and fraseri are in size, dimensions of the soft parts, and the richer chestnut in the wing and tail of rufus.

By habit, N. poensis is a typical thrush, with a turdine ticking alarm call; it lives on or near the forest floor and has the horizontal stance and thrush-like mannerisms of a Blackbird (Turdus merula). What few observations I have would indicate that S. finschi inhabits the middle or upper storeys; I have not actually seen the species 'flycatching' but it has the upright stance when perched typical of all flycatchers, and it seems likely that the bird feeds by making sallies after flying insects, returning to a perch to consume them (although this is denied by Mackworth-Praed & Grant).

It is very difficult to credit, from a study of plumage, that Stizorhina and Neocossyphus are not closely related; there are however rational grounds (habit; bill and leg structure) for including Stizorhina in the Muscicapinae. Hence, on the assumption that the Turdidae, being less specialised, are the more primitive stock, it appears that Stizorhina is an example of a thrush evolved into a flycatcher, which indicates that the Muscicapinae may be polyphyletically derived from the Turdidae (fig. 11). As with many cases amongst the higher taxa (e.g. some vertebrate Classes), it seems that the Muscicapinae are better regarded not so much as a unit derived from a single ancestral stock, ^{but} as a grade of organisation (or better, a habit grade) which has been arrived at independently by more than one line within the Muscicapidae (= Turdidae in the widest application).

The origin of the various species in the two genera is problematic. Superficial similarities between the four birds, and respective geographical distribution, may be indicated as follows, the resemblance of fraseri to finschi being very great, fraseri to rufus great, finschi to poensis considerable, while rufus and poensis are well-demarcated species within their genus but certainly congeneric :