



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



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ON THE FIELD IDENTIFICATION OF THE YELLOW-BILLED EGRET

Sir,

When discussing the problem of distinguishing the Yellow-billed Egret *Egretta intermedia* from the Great White Egret (Heron) *E. alba* in the field, Macdonald (1976, Bull. Nigerian Orn. Soc. 12: 73) did not mention the following point of distinction. In the Yellow-billed Egret the black line of the gape ends immediately below the eye whereas in the Great White Egret it extends over 1 cm past the eye (Cramp & Simmons, 1977, The birds of the Western Palearctic, Vol. I, O.U.P., Oxford, p. 296; Stronach, 1968, Ibis 110: 345; see also Broekhuysen 1969, Field guide to the birds of the South African sea-shore, Timmins, Cape Town, pp. 46-47). At close range the absence of a black line beyond the eye is a good field character of the Yellow-billed Egret.

Adult Yellow-billed Egrets in breeding plumage can also be told from Great White Egrets by the shorter scapular plumes ('aigrettes'). In the Yellow-billed Egret the scapular plumes reach a little, in the Great White Egret far, beyond the tip of the tail (Cramp & Simmons 1977: 296, 301). Under certain conditions (for instance, when observing a flying bird), this can be a useful additional point of distinction.

G. J. Oreeel,
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MIGRATION OF SAVANNA BIRDS REVEALED BY LOCAL RECORDS

Sir,

By a synthesis of information from localities throughout Nigeria, Elgood, Fry & Dowsett (1973, Ibis 115 : 1-45 and 375-411) revealed a tendency for many bird species to migrate northward for the wet season and southward for the dry season. The latitudinal uniformity of climate and vegetation zones over much of West Africa suggests that their conclusions apply more widely. Several authors (e.g. Pettet 1976, Bull. Nig. Orn. Soc. 41 : 18-24; Greig-Smith 1977, Bull. Nig. Orn. Soc. 43 : 3-14; Hall 1977, Bull. Nig. Orn. Soc. 43 : 15-36; Gee & Heigham 1977, Bull. Nig. Orn. Soc. 44 : 103-132; Taylor & Macdonald 1978, Bull. Nig. Orn. Soc. 45 : 4-8) have recently commented further on the migration of particular species, based on