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**Société d'Ornithologie de l'Ouest**  
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JUNE 1967 TO FEBRUARY 1968.

J. B. Heigham.

Victoria Island is roughly oblong, about  $2\frac{1}{2}$  miles long East to West and  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles wide North to South, bounded on the West by Lagos Harbour, on the North by Five Cowrie Creek, on the East by the channel running from Five Cowrie Creek to Kuramo Waters and on the South by the Bight of Benin. The greater part of the surface is flat sand with various reeds and grasses gradually spreading; there are few trees apart from a number of casuarinas and coconut palms at the western end, where there is a certain amount of urban development, and some coconut palms along the shore. The eastern end of the area adjoins Kuramo waters and a decadent mangrove swamp with a marsh behind it which itself is bounded by thick coconut plantation between the villages of Igbosere and Maroko. The open sandy area is drained by a number of wide and deep concrete drains which attract vegetation and, especially in the rainy season, provide a habitat and hunting ground for waders and heron.

My observations were necessarily confined to the period June to February as those were the only months that I was there but I have gone so far as to include birds seen from Victoria Island as well as actually on it; these observations were principally made from the west bank of the Kuramo Channel in the decadent mangrove swamp to the East.

A total of seventy species was identified in the period under review and three or four others, principally predators, were seen but not identified. Brief details are set out in the following notes.

Grey Heron Ardea cinerea.

Seen in every month, especially around Kuramo Waters. Numbers increased in November. Four seen together on 18th November 1967.

Purple Heron Ardea purpurea.

One young bird seen only in mangrove swamp on 17th January 1968, when the three other species of Heron were also present.

Little Egret Egretta garzetta.

Seen in every month, especially in mangrove swamp. Groups of up to twenty-five often appear to commute between Five Cowrie Creek and the Apapa marshes.

Green-backed Heron Butorides striatus.

Constantly present making particular use of drainage ditches for hunting in rainy season. In November/December a number of juveniles observed, described in my field notes as follows: "Heron 14 to 16 inches. Crown and nape sepia. Bill long; upper mandible dark, lower mandible yellowish. Light stripe on either side of throat. Upper parts dark brown streaked light brown or buff. Short neck. Short tail. Legs light brown. In flight like G. B. Heron but wing beats quicker and less thorough. Notably less wary of human presence than adult G. B. Heron."

Black Kite Milvus migrans.

Absent from June to October. First bird seen 7th October 1967. Thereafter common, especially at harbour end of island.

Black-shouldered Kite Elanus caeruleus

Seen only once on 12th August 1967, perched for some minutes on dead tree.

Eritrean Shikra Accipiter badius.

Present in every month, frequenting both sand flats and urbanised areas.

Note: The three species above are the only birds of prey of whose identification I am positive. J. A. Button also identified two Kestrels Falco tinnunculus on 20th December 1967.

Among many other uncertain sightings two other possibilities stand out, viz:

(a) Tawny Eagle Aquila rapax.

Seen on 23rd November 1967, flying slowly about 200 feet high from the direction of Maroko towards the harbour entrance, and

(b) Grey Kestrel Falco ardiosacus.

Seen perched in a tree behind the urban area on 23rd January 1968.

**Finfoot Podica senegalensis.**

Seen twice in January 1968, among mangroves at western end of Kuramo Waters near Igbosere village where there is considerable human activity.

**Water Thick-knee Oedichnemus vermiculatus.**

Three birds seen on 2nd October 1967, in mangrove swamp by Kuramo Channel. Several sightings of single birds thereafter both on Victoria Island and in mangrove swamp. Last sighting, a juvenile in mangrove swamp on 14th December 1967.

**Painted Snipe Rostratula benghalensis.**

First seen on 12th July 1967. Two families appeared to have bred among the reeds in a drainage ditch in the sand flats about 500 yards from the houses at the western and north-western end of the island.

Two adults were seen, one with upper parts generally dark brown spotted with golden buff, well defined buff head stripe and bright golden-buff lines down either side of the back; this one had four chicks which were also darkish-brown. The other adult, while markings were generally similar, was lighter in colour, grey-brown, and showed less contrast between the markings; the latter was accompanied by three chicks also of lighter colour and larger than the first family.

The first adult and darker chicks were first seen on 30th July and altogether seen three times in July and August; on two of these occasions the other adult with the lighter and larger chicks were also present. The adults were seen separately on several occasions but towards the end of August they disappeared and the last sighting was of a flying juvenile on 26th August 1967.

**Kittlitz's Sand-Plover Leucopoliis pecuarius.**

Very common on sandflats in June and July in groups of up to twelve. Numbers decrease as area became less marshy. Last sighting of a single bird consorting with Little Stints Erolia minuta recorded on 14th September 1967.

**Forbes' Banded Plover Afroxechus forbesi.**

Seen late January and early February. Highest number five on 22nd January 1968.

**Ringed Plover Charadrius hiaticula.**

About twelve first seen on 2nd October 1967. Small parties frequently seen thereafter up to February especially in mangrove swamps near Kuramo Waters. Largest number 25/30 on 28th January 1968.

**Little Ringed Plover Charadrius dubius.**

First seen on 18th November 1967; thereafter a frequent visitor to much the same areas as Ringed Plovers, sometimes in company with them.

**Grey Plover Squatarola squatarola.**

Seen in the open parts of decadent mangrove swamps frequently from September to December, but never more than three birds at one time.

**Common Snipe Capella gallinago.**

One pair flushed from mangrove swamp 12th November 1967.

**Little Stint Erolia minuta.**

Frequent visitor in small numbers to the shore line from September onwards.

**Greenshank Glottis nebularius.**

First seen 3rd June 1967, and constantly present thereafter but in larger numbers between August and December, especially in mangrove swamp near Kuramo Waters.

**Redshank Tringa totanus.**

First seen on 12th August 1967; one bird in company with Painted Snipe and family of four chicks. Thereafter infrequently seen on passage; largest number five seen feeding in mangrove swamp with Greenshanks on 9th September 1967.

**Common Sandpiper Actitis hypoleucos.**

Present all over the island throughout the period. Largest numbers most frequent on edges of mangrove swamp and Kuramo Waters from about October onwards.

Marsh Sandpiper Tringa stagnatilis.

35.

Single birds seen twice on 22nd November (in company with 4 Green Sandpipers) and on 19th December 1967. One also seen by J. A. Button on 20th December.

Green Sandpiper Tringa ochropus.

First observed 22nd November 1967; thereafter seen frequently in small numbers (up to four) in various parts of the island.

Black-tailed Godwit Limosa limosa.

Seen only once; one bird on passage on 12th October 1967.

Whimbrel Numenius phaeopus.

Single bird first seen on sandflats 3rd June 1967. Constantly present thereafter, especially in mangrove swamps and marshes near Kuramo Waters. Numbers greatly increased in September/October when flocks of 50+ seen.

Temminck's Courser Cursorius temminckii.

Seen only in June on sandflats both near Apese village and near urban area. Largest number seen, four.

Grey Pratincole Galachrysis cinerea.

Two or three first seen on 23rd July 1967. During August seen from time to time in small numbers but numbers increased greatly in September and October until eventually there were some 250/300 frequenting the large sand piles near the Nigerian Law School's new building, but flying in smaller parties all round the island. In October it was noted that towards sundown all the Grey Pratincoles flew off to the south-west in parties of 20/50 generally keeping low over land and water in the direction of Tarkwa Bay and Badagry Creek. The numbers remained apparently consistent until 2nd November, 1967, after which no more were observed on Victoria Island.

Lesser Black-backed Gull Larus fuscus.

Eight birds first observed over harbour on 29th August 1967. Thereafter seen intermittently throughout the period; sometimes single birds or small parties off-shore and sometimes larger flocks flying at considerable height in the evening, generally in a N.E. direction. No doubt the same birds as were frequenting Light House Beach during the day.

Sandwich Tern Sterna sandvicensis.

Single birds and pairs seen from time to time along the seashore and occasionally over Kuramo Waters. Many seen over the harbour.

Black Tern Chlidonias nigra. First identified on seashore on 26th November 1967, when considerable numbers were foraging along the high tide mark where a lot of small fish had been left by fishermen. Many of these birds were caught by small boys using nylon fishing line nooses baited with small fish and held down on the shore by a pinch of wet sand. These birds seemed to have the ability, while hovering above whatever they were investigating, to fly a few inches backwards. They were also often seen skimming the waters of the harbour for fish and on 31st January 1968, 500/600 were observed in this activity.

Note: Various other terns were seen from time to time off the shore and over the harbour and these no doubt included Common Terns Sterna hirundo and West African Little Terns Sterna albifrons but I could not claim positive identifications.

Red-eyed Turtle Dove Streptopelia semitorquata.

A frequent visitor throughout the period but did not appear to roost or breed on the island.

Senegal Laughing Dove Stigmatopelia senegalensis.

Constantly present, many birds roosting regularly in the mangroves by Kuramo Waters.

Didric Cuckoo Lamprolaima caprius.

One pair present around the built up area throughout the period.

Senegal Coucal Centropus senegalensis.

Present throughout the period in all parts of the island. The Rufous-bellied Coucal C. epomidis, was also observed throughout the period but was only seen at the

eastern end of the island, viz. in the mangrove swamps by Kuramo Waters and in a clump of mixed trees beside Five Cowrie Creek. I assume that it is now established that these are the same species.

Plain Nightjar Caprimulgus inornatus.

Seen twice, on 17th June and 24th September 1967, on the sandflats.

Long-tailed Nightjar Scotornis climacurus.

Seen intermittently on the sandflats throughout the period. Heard most frequently in the rainy season.

Little African Swift Colletoptera affinis.

Present in varying numbers throughout the period.

Palm Swift Cypsiurus parvus.

Present in varying numbers throughout the period.

Pied Kingfisher Ceryle rudis.

Only one pair seen, on 17th June 1967, flying west from Kuramo Waters. I should have expected to see these birds frequently around Kuramo Waters and Five Cowrie Creek.

Malachite Kingfisher Corythornis cristata.

Frequently seen, especially by Kuramo Channel and the adjoining drainage ditches.

Senegal Kingfisher Halcyon senegalensis.

Frequently seen, especially along the shore of Five Cowrie Creek.

Rosy Bee-Eater Merops malimbicus.

Seen twice in October in the early morning. Also noted by J. A. Button on 20th December 1967.

White-throated Bee-Eater Aerops albicollis.

First seen early morning 29th October 1967. Thereafter seen from time to time in small numbers morning and evening in mangrove swamps.

Grey Woodpecker Mesopicos goertae.

Five seen on Coconut palms in Kuramo Channel marshes early morning 3rd December 1967.

Buckley's Bush Lark Mirafra buckleyi.

First noted 24th June 1967, in characteristic wing flapping flight and sudden descent to the ground. Thereafter seen from time to time on sandflats.

Blue-headed Wagtail Budytes flavus.

First noted 9th October 1967; thereafter seen regularly in all parts of the Island for rest of period. In the evening large numbers regularly flew eastwards in varied flocks apparently to roost in mangroves and secondary forest South of Lagos lagoon.

Plain-backed Pipit Anthus leucophrys.

At first confused with Buckley's Bush Lark, this bird was seen in pairs regularly throughout the period on the sandflats.

Yellow-throated Longclaw Macronyx croceus.

Present throughout the period. Juveniles also seen, so presumably breeds on Victoria Island.

Common Bulbul Pycnonotus barbatus.

Continually present in all parts of the island.

Wattle-eyed Flycatcher Platysteyra cyanea.

Constantly present among mangrove bushes at eastern end. More often heard than seen.

Whinchat Saxicola rubetra.

One seen on sandflats in February. Also seen on two other occasions in January and February by G. Pettit.

West African Prinia Prinia subflava.

Pairs and single birds constantly present among reeds and grass on sandflats. Three seen by J. A. Button on 20th December, 1967.

Rufous Grass-Warbler Cisticola galactotes.

Regularly present on sandflats. 15 seen by J. A. Button on 20th December, 1967.

Note: I believe that various other Grass-Warblers are present among the grass and reeds of the sandflats, particularly the Gold Coast Fantail Warbler Cisticola juncidis. but must confess to what appears to be the usual difficulty in separating the species.

European Swallow Hirundo rustica.

A few birds seen on 8th October, 1967. Not positively identified on Victoria Island after October.

Ethiopian Swallow Hirundo aethiopica

Not common but seen in small parties in every month.

Rufous-chested Swallow Hirundo semirufa.

Two or three birds seen flying over island hawking from time to time. Recorded in June, July and October, 1967.

Fiscal Shrike Lanius collaris.

Constantly present around the urban area.

Scarlet-breasted Shrike Laniarius barbarus.

Always present among mango bushes at eastern end of island. Not seen or heard elsewhere.

Woodchat Shrike Lanius senator.

Single birds seen in various parts of sandflats in January and February, 1968. One seen by J. A. Button on 20th December, 1967.

Piapiac Ptilostomus afer.

First positively identified on 12th September, 1967, when a group of seven including three juveniles were seen on the north side of the urban area. This group was frequently seen thereafter flying S.W. in the mornings towards the East Mole and N.E. in the evenings towards the shore of Five Cowrie Creek.

Splendid Glossy Starling Lamprocolius splendidus.

Present throughout the period in a clump of mixed palms and other small trees near Igbosere Village. Frequently visited the urban area.

Copper Sunbird Cinnyris cupreus.

Observed once only on 27th August, 1967, on Exhibition Site.

Splendid Sunbird Cinnyris coccinigaster.

Observed only once in bushes on shore of Five Cowrie Creek on 12th September, 1967.

Scarlet-breasted Sunbird Chalcopittra senegalensis.

Observed once only on 15th October, 1967, in bushes on shore of Five Cowrie Creek.

Collared Sunbird Anthreptes collaris.

Seen frequently throughout the period especially among the mangrove bushes at eastern end of area and occasionally among palms near the scashore.

Note: It is possible that some of these sightings may have been the Yellow-bellied Sunbird Cinnyris venustus.

Grey-headed Sparrow Passer griseus.

Constantly present in the urban area in considerable numbers, also frequently foraging on the sandflats and round the fishing village of Apese.

Village Weaver Floicocitraga cucullatus.

A well established colony of 150/200 birds lived throughout the period in a casuarina tree besides the fishermen's houses at the landward side of the East Mole. Small parties and individuals often seen around the Exhibition site and urban area.

Bronze Mannikin Spermestes cucullatus.

Constantly present in groups in all parts of the island.

Senegal Fire Finch Lagonosticta senegala.

Constantly present in the urban area, often associated with flocks of Bronze Mannikins S. cucullatus and Senegal Combassous H. chalybeata.

Senegal Combassou Hippochera chalybeata.

Male in breeding dress first observed 25rd July, 1967, consorting with Grey-headed Sparrows on sandflats. Thereafter flocks of mixed sexes up to 30 strong frequently observed around urban area. One male in breeding dress observed on 28th January, 1968.

Pin-tailed Whydah Vidua macroura.

Frequently observed in breeding dress June to October, especially on sandflats near Apese Village. Thereafter males in eclipse and females in same area difficult to distinguish from Grey-headed Sparrows.

NOTES FROM TARKWA, LAGOS,

DECEMBER 1967 and JANUARY 1968.

G. Pettitt.

The following notes cover observations of sea and shore birds on nine visits to Tarkwa and Lighthouse beaches. The dates were December 2nd, 3rd, 9/10th, 11th, 14/15th, 16/17th, 23/24th, 25/26th and January 20th. A paper on the ethiopian species and the passerine migrants observed in the forest area behind these beaches will be prepared later for the Bulletin.

White-fronted Sand-plover Leucopoliis marginatus.

regular, up to twelve.

Grey Plover Squatarola squatarola.

up to five present most dates.

Ringed Plover Charadrius hiaticula.

One 25th December.

Little Stint Erolia minuta.

One 26th December.

Sanderling Crocethia alba.

Usually 80 present.

Turnstone Arenaria interpres.

one on the West Mole, 11th December.

Common Sandpiper Actitis hypoleucos.

maximum of twelve on 16/17th December.

Greenshank Glottis nebularius.

up to three regularly.

Bar-tailed Godwit Limosa lapponica.

Singly 3rd and 14/14th December; nine with the roosting Whimbrel on 17th December.

Whimbrel Numenius phaeopus.

On some nights but not all; a large flock roosts on the shore. 650 were counted leaving for the west on the morning of 3rd December and 450 on the 17th.

Skua Stercorarius species.

An immature skua was seen on 2nd December and thought to be a Long-tailed. It was