



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



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UNDERPARTS: Throat and breast yellow-brown streaked with dark-brown finely on the throat and more heavily on the breast. Belly and flanks dark brown. Vent and undertail coverts pale brown, almost whitish. Undertail paler than uppertail, transverse bars not very contrasted. The sitting bird when seen from the front appeared to have a pale bib and dark brown "trousers".

SOFT PARTS: Irides grey, perhaps changing to very pale yellow during the time the bird spent at Ibadan. Cere dirty yellow. Bill brown-horn. Legs feathered to joint only with dirty yellow tarsi and feet and black claws.

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WILDFOWL IN NIGERIA
THE 1967/68 CENSUS.

R. E. Sharland.

In January 1968 the Nigerian Ornithologists' Society co-operated for the second time with the I. W. R. B. and attempted a census of duck in certain areas in Nigeria.

It was not possible to obtain as many observers as the previous year; nevertheless it was apparent from the results that the number of migrant duck present was considerably less than the year before.

Southern Nigeria.

Counts on resevoirs in the Ibadan area were restricted by the emergency and no duck were recorded. Counts however were made in the Ilaro area producing 35 White-faced Duck Dendrocygna viduata and one Egyptian Goose Alopochen aegyptiacus.

No counts were made in the Eastern Region. I feel that duck are not so rare in some areas of Eastern Nigeria. When I visited Itu in 1951 I found two pairs of Pygmy Geese Nettapus auritus and saw three small flocks of White-faced Duck on the rice fields in the Leper Colony.

The Great Rivers.

Three counts were made on the River Niger. Some numbers of African species were counted but no Palaearctic duck were found.

It is worth noting that Leslie Brown in "Birds and I" 1947 says that "large numbers of ducks, notably Teal and Pintail, visit some swamps about the river, liking especially rice fields.....Garganey also occur, but not in such numbers or so far South".

It would be interesting to know whether the absence of recent reports of migrant duck near the River Niger is a true change in habits or merely means lack of observers. My personal experience is limited to marshes near the Benue in 1951 when I saw Garganey Anas querquedula in flocks up to 30.

The River Yobe Drainage Basin.

Wildfowl counts were made near Nguru, Hadejia, Damasak and Kazaure.

The poor rainfall during the previous summer meant that many of the lakes near Kano dried up very early and some lakes near Nguru were reduced in size. Rainfall can vary greatly even in a matter of a few miles. The Kazaure lakes (which strictly do not drain into the Yobe system) held much more water this year and more duck were seen there than for many years past.

Garganey were recorded in nearly all localities usually in smaller flocks than 1966/67 with the exception of Kazaure- 1,200 in February and Nguru-1,300 in December. Pintail Dafila acuta were comparatively scarce the largest flock- 250 being seen at Damasak in January. Ferruginous Duck Nyroca nyroca showed little change from the year before, 300 being counted in three places. The only other Palaearctic duck recorded was a Teal Anas crecca seen near Accra.

Of African species White-faced Duck appeared to be slightly less numerous than the year before and Fulvous Duck Dendrocygna fulva were markedly fewer, the largest flock being 250 at Nguru.

Numbers of African geese appeared to be fewer than the year before. The largest count of Knob-billed Geese Sarkidiornis melanotus was 100 and Egyptian

Geese were scarce. White-backed Duck Thalassornis leuconotus were found at two places with a maximum of 20. In March I visited a lake near Kano which always holds a number of this interesting duck and counted over 300.

A very interesting discovery was made at Kazaure during the year. Three broods of recently hatched Hottentot Teal Anas punctata were found and a flock of 30 was counted. (see Notes page 48.).

Remaining Areas.

A few African duck were seen in the course of two counts on mining reservoirs on the Plateau. I feel that duck and geese increase in numbers on the Plateau during the rains and know that in some wet seasons there is an immigration of duck to the Kaduna area.

Three counts were made on Lake Alo near Maiduguri. A maximum of 100 Pintail and 40 Garganey were counted but no other migrant duck.

It is regretted that the Sokoto lakes could not be counted this year.

The fluctuations in numbers of duck visiting Nigeria is a subject which requires considerable research. Rainfall can vary greatly in only a few miles, deep lakes appear one season and do not appear again for many years; these occasional lakes seem to be good feeding areas for duck. Lakes vary in their vegetation and the amount of grass and water-lily coverage every year. In the Nguru area some of the lakes are farmed when they dry up and these lakes are often popular with Garganey the next dry season. Pintail spend the day on large open lakes and frequently flight at dusk to lakes mainly covered in grass which are not popular with other duck. The large herds of cattle in the Nguru area are probably another factor affecting the plant and animal life to the benefit of the duck population.

Acknowledgements are due to the following who took part in the census.

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NOTES.

PRE-BREEDING SEASON COPULATION BY

WHITE-THROATED BEE-EATERS Aerops albicollis.

Whilst bird-watching in the Botanic Gardens of Ibadan University during the late afternoon of 6th March, 1968, I saw what was clearly an early anticipation of the breeding season on the part of a pair of White-throated Bee-eaters. After a brief period of display the pair copulated for what, by bee-eaters standards, can only be described as a prolonged period. The interest of this is that it should have occurred at this date and in this locality. Although little is still known about the breeding of this species of bee-eater in Nigeria, it appears to occur during June and July (possibly August) and some 400-500 miles to the north of Ibadan near the desert edge (sahel zone) (Fry: Bull.N.O.S. 7 : 82-83). During the few days preceding this observation the behavior pattern of the bee-eaters wintering in the University grounds had begun to change. Flocks were far more restless and during the day there was a greater dispersion of birds while communal flights in the evening were composed of larger groups of birds which were far more vocal - very similar behaviour, in fact, to what I have seen at the breeding grounds of this species in the Sudan.

Antony Pettet.

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