



West African Ornithological Society
Société d'Ornithologie de l'Ouest
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NEW RECORDS FOR OBUDU PLATEAU.

Elgood (Nigerian Field 30:60-69, 1965) listed 87 species. In 1965 (Bull. Niger. Orn. Soc. 7:83) I added 5 more. Since then, I have also seen:

Secretary Bird Sagittarius serpentarius. On 11th April, 1968 my wife and I saw this spectacular bird flying high over the approach road at 4,200 feet altitude and settle on top of a small tree a mile away. Mr. Wallace Cranfield, the manager of the Obudu Cattle Ranch, told me that he has occasionally seen 1 or 2 of these large birds on the grass 5 miles south of the ranch headquarters. They apparently live only in this one area of the Plateau.

Bambara Cliff-chat Thamnolaea cinnamomeiventris. At 3,000 feet on rocks along the approach road. 2 males and 1 female seen on a rainy afternoon, 4th June, 1966. 3 females at the same place on 23rd December, 1967, giving out the "beautiful whistle" as described by Bannerman (1953, p.982). Rock Buntings Fringillaria tahapisi live in the same location. Dr. C. H. Fry mentioned in a letter that this occurrence of Thamnolaea cinnamomeiventris was of interest since it represents a new area of distribution for this species. Also, Thamnolaea coronata White-crowned Cliff-chat, occurs at a higher altitude (4,200 feet) in the same area. This common occurrence of the 2 Thamnolaea makes it likely that they are separate species, not subspecies.

Mackinnon's Grey Shrike Lanius mackinnoni. Seen at forest edge; November, 1965 and 22nd December, 1967.

Amethyst Starling Cinnyricinclus leucogaster. Common, with many males singing in the tops of small trees, at 3,000 to 3,500 feet along the approach road, 12th April, 1968. (Also common, at that time, at lower altitudes on the road between Obudu Town and the Plateau).

Grosbeak Seed-eater Poliospiza burtoni. One in grass at forest edge, 22nd December, 1967.

West African Little Weaver Pityragra monacha. Two males seen at forest edge 22nd December, 1967, again in February and April 1968.

Mr. Cranfield also told me of two other species he has seen;

Cattle Egret Bubulcus ibis. Seen only once in grass.

Yellow-billed Oxpecker Buphagus africanus. Occasionally lives on cattle at the ranch. Mr. Cranfield attributes its rarity to the fact that the cattle are regularly dipped, so they have few ticks.

Herman H. Gray.

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MAGPIE MANNIKIN IN NIGER PROVINCE.

On 11th February, 1968 at Shaffini (9° 54'N, 4° 45'E), Niger Province, North Western State two pairs of Magpie Mannikins Amauresthes fringilloides were observed nest building. They were easily identified being noticeably larger than Bronze Mannikins Spermestes cucullatus, which were in the vicinity. Their shape was also distinctive with large rounded head, "no neck" and heavy bill reminding one of a Seed-cracker Pironestes sp., The most striking features of the plumage were the glossy black head, and pure white underparts with a black mark at each side of the breast. Other points noticed were the shining black bill and dull brown wings without bronze sheen or white barring.

The nests were placed about 15 feet up in a clump of Raphia palm Raphia sudanica. They were large untidy balls of coarse grasses or strips of palm frond giving the impression of being only partly completed. On 17th February, 1968, the nests appeared unchanged and only one bird was seen in the area. At my next visit on 3rd March, 1968, both nests had been destroyed and no birds were seen.

The nest tree was located by a perennial river, the Maingyara, (a major tributary of the Kontagora River) at a point where it spreads out into a wide shallow pool, an important fording place for herds of trade cattle going south to Jebba and the West. The immediate surrounds are swamp forest with clearings for a variety of crops. Rice is said to be an important food of the Magpie