



**West African Ornithological Society  
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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

Mannikin but it is only cultivated on a very small scale at Shaffini. Bronze Mannikins are common there but the Blue-billed Mannikin Spermestes poensis has not been recorded.

The Magpie Mannikin is a widely distributed species extending from Senegal to the Sudan, Uganda, Kenya, Zambia, eastern Transvaal and Natal according to MacKworth-Praed & Grant (1960, Birds of Eastern and North Eastern Africa. Vol.2. 2nd.ed.). Bannerman (1953, Birds of West & Equatorial Africa. Vol.2.) states that in West Africa it is a distinctly local species being "now nearly exterminated" in Senegal and Gambia and not recorded from Nigeria though present in the north of the British Cameroon Elgood (1964, Bull.Niger.Orn.Soc. 1 (1):13-25), includes it in his checklist of Nigerian Birds as a "rare forest resident". However he does not include it in his lengthy Checklist of Ibadan Birds (Elgood & Sibley, 1964, Ibis 106 :221-248). Subsequently no writer in the N.O.S. Bulletin has referred to the species and Dr. C. H. Fry (in litt.) informs me that he has never encountered it. This appears to be the first record published with details of locality etc., of a rare Nigerian species. \*\*\*

F. Walsh.

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#### A BLACK STORK IN BORGU.

On 6th April, 1968 in the Central Borgu Game Reserve, Kwara State, I had a distant view of a Black Stork Ciconia nigra gliding down towards the bed of the Oli River (10° 3'N, 3° 54'E). It was noticeably larger than a Wolly-necked Stork Dissoura episcopus seen in approximately the same place a few minutes before. Fortunately it banked just before disappearing below tree level and the completely dark upper surface was clearly seen, the only white being on the belly, flanks, undertail coverts and triangular axillary patches. The range and light were such that the beak and leg colours were not noted. The Oli River is remarkable for Ciconiidae records, having provided half my total sightings of D. episcopus and the only record of Saddle-billed Stork Ephippiorhynchus senegalensis for the area ( a single bird seen in April, 1967 by Mr. David Brown, Assistant Game Warden).

It may be worth mentioning that on the 23rd November, 1967 I saw a white-bellied stork circling very high over the Niger at Bubaru Rapids (10° 5'N, 4° 34'E). My impression was of a large bird. However its upper surface was not observed. Subsequent experience of Abdim's Stork Sphenorhynchus abdimii inclines me to believe this bird was also a C. nigra.

Bannerman (1953) records C. nigra from Gambia, Portuguese Guinea, Ghana, Nigeria-Benue River and French Chad. Elgood et al. (1966) add only a captive bird in Kano, January 1964 and no further information for West Africa is provided by Moreau (1967). Thus the Borgu record constitutes the only real recent observation of a bird hitherto rarely encountered in West Africa.

Unlike the White Stork Ciconia ciconia, C. nigra has no breeding population in North Africa and its Iberian population is both small and diminishing (Thomson, 1964). Hence the lack of records in West Africa is unlikely to be entirely owing to paucity of ornithologists. Nevertheless it is recorded regularly on passage in Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia and all these birds are believed to winter south of the Sahara ( Etchécopar & Hue 1967) although none has ever been seen over the Sahara (Moreau 1967).

Do these birds perform a transverse migration to East Africa so meeting up with their Eastern European relatives or do they still remain to be detected overwintering in West Africa? Is the middle Niger valley one of the overwintering sites?

#### References:

Bannerman, D.A. (1953). Birds of West and Equatorial Africa. Vol.1.  
London : Oliver and Boyd.

\*\*\* W.Serle (1957, Ibis 99 : 677) states in A Contribution to the Ornithology of the Eastern Region of Nigeria, under Amauresthes fringilloides : " Two observed on 11th July, 1954 in a grassy clearing in the forest at Uyo, Calabar Province. There seems to be no other record for the region." As the Ibadan set of Nigerian Field is distributed for indexing purposes I have not been able to check this for other records.

Ed.