



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



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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.

- Elgood, J.H., Sharland, R.E. & Ward, P. (1966). Palearctic Migrants in Nigeria. *Ibis* 108 : 84-116.
- Etchécopar, R.D. & Hue, F. (1967). The Birds of North Africa. London : Oliver & Boyd.
- Moreau, R.E. (1967). Water-birds over the Sahara. *Ibis* 109 : 232-259.
- Thomson, A.L. (1964). Artical 'Stork' in Thomson, A.L. (ed).  
New Dict. Birds. London : Nelson.

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NEW RECORDS FOR 'THE IBADAN AREA.

Violet Plantain-eater Musophaga violacea. A single bird was seen near the Fish Pond of Ibadan University on 21st April, 1968. It was seen only once although the area has been visited regularly before and since. Presumably this is another example of the continued southerly extension of savanna birds into the Ibadan region.

Pallid Swift Apus pallidus. Three birds of this species were seen feeding over the Farm of Ibadan University during the early afternoon of 13th March, 1968. These birds occurred at the beginning of the first conspicuous movements of European Swifts Micropus apus which lasted several days. Elgood et al. (1966, *Ibis* 108:104) cite previous records for the Jos Plateau and Zaria so that the Ibadan record constitutes the most southerly one for the species. It is not a difficult species to identify, provided birds are low enough and light is good, and observers should examine flocks of European Swifts for the presence of this bird, although my experience in the Sudan where the species is common indicates it is apt to winter further north than Micropus and migrate at slightly different times.

European Bee-eater Merops apiaster. At least four birds, believed to have been on passage, were seen over the grounds of Ibadan University on the 8th April, 1968. This is a species which is probably a more common passage migrant than Elgood et al. (1966, *Ibis* 108:104) suggest. I have a number of records for the savanna belt immediately to the north of Ibadan.

Red-throated Pipit Anthus cervinus. Present throughout the 1967/68 dry season on the farm of the Ibadan University. First recorded on 30th December, 1967 when four were present but these must have arrived sometime between 9th December when they were not present and 30th December. Numbers increased to ten by 10th January, 1968 and remained at this level until the middle of March when numbers declined (making allowances for an unnatural decline as a result of collecting during February and March). The last bird was recorded on 11th April. A bird in well-defined breeding plumage was seen on 17th January and two had attained this state by 6th February. The birds spent practically the whole period feeding on irrigated vegetable plots, although favouring the more open pineapple plot and the sides of nearby piles of cow-dung. Not recorded by Elgood & Sibley (1964, *Ibis* 106). The most southerly record that Elgood et al. (1966, *Ibis* 108, p.106) quote is Onitsha

Tree Pipit Anthus trivialis. Five birds were seen in the Botanic Gardens of Ibadan University on 20th January, 1968 and single birds seen with Red-throated Pipits A. cervinus on the vegetable plots of the University Farm on 27th January and 9th March. Not recorded by Elgood & Sibley (1964, *Ibis* 106); considered a common winter visitor in the south by Elgood et al. (1966, *Ibis* 108:105) although I believe the possibility of confusion with Red-throated Pipits has been suggested elsewhere.

Antony Pettet.

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