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MIGRANTS AT MALAM'FATORI, LAKE CHAD, SPRING 1968.

R. J. Dowsett.

INTRODUCTION.

I arrived in Nigeria in February this year to start a programme of research into the ecology of resident and migrant birds in the Lake Chad area. This work is partially sponsored by the British Ornithologists' Union and the Nigerian Ornithologists' Society. A subsidiary aspect of this work is the collection of information on migration in the area, and although other work prevents the ringing of huge numbers of migrants a good many have been ringed in the course of routine census and weights studies.

This research programme is based on the Federal Fisheries Service Station at Malam'fatori on the west shore of Lake Chad. This work is possible only through the enthusiastic assistance of Mr. & Mrs. A.J.Hopson of Malam'fatori and Mr. & Mrs. R.E.Sharland of Kano, and of members of the B.O.U., especially Prof. J.H. Elgood and Dr. J.F. Monk. As in the spring of 1967 a B.O.U. sponsored team has spent a month at Malam'fatori studying aspects of fat deposition in migrants, and I am grateful to its members Mr. I.J. Ferguson-Lees, Dr. C.H. Fry and Mr. T.L. Lloyd-Evans, for much invaluable assistance. The only other ornithologist able to visit Malam'fatori this spring was Mr. J.A. Button of Ilaro.

The B. O. U. has kindly made a grant towards my expenses, and the N. O. S. has contributed towards the cost of rings and has allowed me to use its accommodation at Malam'fatori. Visiting ornithologists are most welcome, especially in autumn which is less well known than spring, but are warned that I should be notified at least a month in advance if transport is required. The track from Maiduguri is suitable for Land Rover only and as it is often a five hour journey the trip is undertaken only occasionally for stores - it is not possible to collect people at Maiduguri at short notice. Visitors should be entirely self-sufficient. Stores are often in short supply in Maiduguri, and are unobtainable at Malam'fatori. The postal service is extremely poor and even from within Nigeria letters may take a month to reach Malam'fatori.

WEATHER.

Detailed meteorological data are collected at Malam'fatori by the Federal Fisheries Service, and Mr. Hopson has kindly made them available to me. However, the movement of Palaearctic migrants north in spring is less sure and apparently little influenced by local weather conditions.

SYSTEMATIC LIST OF PALAEARCTIC MIGRANTS.

Most species that are of Ethiopian distribution as well as being potential migrants from the Palaearctic, such as the Grey Heron Ardea cinerea, are not discussed here. Scientific names are given the first time species are mentioned and these generally follow White, C.M.N. (1960-1965) Check List of African Birds. Lusaka, Zambia. Records cover the period 7th March to 31st May. The number of each species ringed during this period appears in brackets after its name.

Glossy Ibis Plegadis falcinellus: quite common throughout, sometimes in flocks of a hundred.

Garganey Anas querquedula: small numbers present in March.

Long-legged Buzzard Buteo rufinus: one seen by A.J.Hopson 16th May. This is very late for a Palaearctic bird, and even the sedentary cirtensis of North Africa is breeding by March.

Marsh Harrier Circus aeruginosus: one female 2nd April.

Pallid Harrier Circus macrourus: occasionally noted singly in April.

Montagu's Harrier Circus pygargus: an immature male 10th and 11th March. A few unidentified "ring-tails" seen.

Osprey Pandion haliaetus: several, occasional at least to the end of May.

Kestrel Falco tinnunculus: singly to the 1st May.

Quail Coturnix coturnix: up to three daily to 20th March.

Kentish Plover Charadrius alexandrinus: one on several dates 17th April to 24th May.

Little Ringed Plover Charadrius dubius: up to six in a day, to 24th May.

- Ringed Plover Charadrius hiaticula: (2) up to a dozen in a day, to 24th May.
- Grey Plover Pluvialis squatarola: one seen 23rd May.
- Sanderling Calidris alba: one 29th April - first record for the area.
- Curlew Sandpiper Calidris ferruginea: (1) scarce, up to 12 in a day, to 23rd May.
- Little Stint Calidris minuta: (44) common, last seen 23rd May. Large numbers passed mid-May,
- Temminck's Stint Calidris temminckii: (1) heard once mid-April (C.H.Fry) and one caught 17th April.
- Snipe Gallinago gallinago: up to 6 daily to 12th May.
- Black-tailed Godwit Limosa limosa: small numbers throughout (into July).
- Ruff Philomachus pugnax: (23) abundant, in thousands. All but a few left second week in May.
- Spotted Redshank Tringa erythropus: one or two occasionally to 24th May.
- Wood Sandpiper Tringa glareola: (12) up to 20 daily, last seen 17th May.
- Common Sandpiper Tringa hypoleucos: (1) scarce, one or two to mid-May, with once 20 in late April (T.L.Lloyd-Evans).
- Greenshank Tringa nebularia: peak passage May, parties of up to a dozen. Small numbers throughout (into July).
- Green Sandpiper Tringa ocropus: one seen 5th April.
- Marsh Sandpiper Tringa stagnatilis: (2) up to six daily to late May.
- Redshank Tringa totanus: one or two between 12th and 24th May.
- Black-winged Stilt Himantopus himantopus: common throughout this period.
- Whiskered Tern Chlidonias hybrida: small parties on a number of days in April and May (and also seen in July)
- White-winged Black Tern Chlidonias leucoptera: peak of up to 750 daily in mid-April; present throughout (into July).
- Gull-billed Tern Gelochelidon nilotica: small numbers to late May.
- Lesser Black-backed Gull Larus fuscus: up to six daily in March (also present in June and July).
- Hoopoe Upupa epops epops: this race definitely identified in small numbers to late March
- Wryneck Jynx torquilla: (4) four different birds 9th March to 2nd May.
- European Swallow Hirundo rustica: (4) very small numbers to 21st April, peak of 250 on 14th April.
- European Sand Martin Riparia riparia: (968) abundant to 15th May, small numbers thereafter, last seen 28th.
- Red-throated Pipit Anthus cervinus: very small numbers, last bird (singly) on 17th May.
- Tree Pipit Anthus trivialis: (3) two caught on 22nd and one on 28th April - first record for the area.
- Yellow Wagtail Motacilla flava: (1,252) very numerous. The commonest races by far were flava and feldbergi, with cincrocapilla, beema, thunbergi, dombrowskii, melanogrisea and iberiae also noted. Last seen 23rd May.
- Red-tailed Shrike Lanius collurio phoenicuroides: (2) small numbers to last week in March.
- Woodchat Shrike Lanius senator: moderate numbers to last week in March.
- Nightingale Luscinia megarhynchos: (5) singles on five days 20th March to 26th April.
- Wheatear Oenanthe oenanthe: numerous early March, few by the last week, and last seen 17th April.
- Redstart Phoenicurus phoenicurus: (20) up to three daily to 19th April, with singles seen 1st May (R.J.D.) and 21st May (A.J.Hopson).
- Whinchat Saxicola rubetra: singles seen 21st April and 21st May.
- Great Reed Warbler Acrocephalus arundinaceus: (56) small numbers daily to 18th May, pe 11th to 25th April.

Blythe's Reed Warbler Acrocephalus dumetorum: (2) four birds with the characters of this species were caught in March, two in April.

Sedge Warbler Acrocephalus schoenobaenus: (647) large numbers daily to 2nd June. Peak numbers 11th to 25th April, with a smaller peak first week of May.

Reed Warbler Acrocephalus scirpaceus: (235) small numbers to 14th May, peak 12th to 23rd April.

Icterine Warbler Hippolias icterina: (6) at least seven different birds 21st April to 13th May.

Olivaceous Warbler Hippolias pallida opaca: (3) three birds of this race caught 8th to 23rd April.

Savi's Warbler Locustella luscinioides(1) one caught 18th April - third record for Nigeria.

Bonelli's Warbler Phylloscopus bonelli: (1) only twice noted, last on 23rd March.

Wood Warbler Phylloscopus sibilatrix: (7) at least nine different birds 12th April to 3rd May,

Willow Warbler Phylloscopus trochilus: (12) small numbers 21st March to 24th April.

Blackcap Sylvia atricapilla: (3) single females caught 18th March, 20th April and 2nd May, and a male seen by Jane Hopson last week of March.

Garden Warbler Sylvia borin: (197) first (3) on 2nd April, then present continuously in moderate numbers 7th April to 21st May, several peaks in numbers occurring throughout this period.

Subalpine Warbler Sylvia cantillans: (34) present in small numbers to 28th March, with one on 6th April.

Whitethroat Sylvia communis: (767) present small numbers to 30th March, then several influxes with peaks 9th April and moderate numbers to 20th April. Thereafter scarce, last seen 1st May.

Lesser Whitethroat Sylvia curruca: (16) very small numbers to 24th March, with four singles 3rd to 11th April.

Pied Flycatcher Ficedula hypoleuca: (2) a female on 2nd May and a male on 3rd are the first spring records for the area.

Spotted Flycatcher Muscicapa striata: (7) one seen 21st April (I.J.Ferguson-Lees), then daily 25th April to 8th May, peak six on 25th. There are only a couple of spring records previously for the area.

RINGING OF PALAEARCTIC MIGRANTS.

During the spring 4,338 Palaearctic migrants of 32 species were ringed. To date there have been no recoveries, but a Sand Martin ringed in Denmark in July 1967 was controlled at Malam'fatori on 4th April. The only birds retrapped from previous years were two Subalpine Warblers and one Yellow Wagtail, all ringed in March 1967 by A.J.Hopson. None of the 2,300 migrants ringed in April 1967 (including 900 Whitethroats) has been retrapped or recovered.

ETHIOPIAN MIGRANTS, SPRING 1968

The movements of Ethiopian species in Nigeria are less well known than those of the Palaearctics, but a number of species in the Lake Chad area are clearly migrants and there may be many others. Descriptions of general status in the area are taken from Hopson, A.J.(1965) Preliminary Notes on the Birds of Malam'fatori, Lake Chad. Bull. Niger. Orn. Soc. 4 : 7-15 (and subsequent amendments in the same journal). Nomenclature generally follows White, except that Bannermanian generic names are included in brackets where these differ. Unless stated to the contrary all records are for the period 7th March to 31st May.

Hamerkop Scopus umbretta: (June-Nov); first definitely seen 11th May, small numbers thereafter.

Abdim's Stork Ciconia (Sphenorhynchus) abdimii(June-Nov): one seen in April (I.J.Ferguson-Lees), occasional from 2nd May, widespread June onwards. Breeding well advanced in southern Bornu Province before birds have arrived in Malam'fatori area.

Lark-like Buttonquail Ortyxelos meiffrenii(July-Dec): first seen on 1st July, frequent from 6th.

- Lesser Moorhen Gallinula angulata (July): seen 1st April (I.J. Ferguson-Lees, C.H. Fry).
- Allen's Gallinule Porphyrio (Porphyrola) alleni (Aug-Dec): seen 1st April (I.J. Ferguson-Lees, C.H. Fry).
- White-fronted Sandplover Charadrius (Leucopoliis) marginatus (May-June): small numbers from 11th May.
- Three-banded Plover Charadrius (Afroxyechus) tricollaris (Aug-Sept): one seen 16th May (A.J. Hopson) and 21st May.
- Little Tern Sterna albifrons (April 1967): two flew north 11th May and two seen by Hopson on 16th. In July several were seen on the Lake at islands where they were probably breeding.
- Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse Pterocles exustus (Oct-Apr): present in moderate numbers to mid-April, then smaller numbers to 22nd May, when last seen.
- Four-banded Sandgrouse Pterocles quadricinctus (June-Oct): first seen 26th April, thereafter moderate numbers, with very large numbers from mid-May.
- Jacobin Crested Cuckoo Cleantor jacobinus (Occasional): first seen 17th May, small numbers thereafter.
- Chestnut-bellied Kingfisher Halcyon leucocephala (June-Oct): first seen by me 11th May, but a few days earlier by Jane Hopson. Widespread by the end of the month.
- Senegal Kingfisher Halcyon senegalensis ("Wet season"): first seen 6th July, small numbers thereafter.
- White-throated Bee-eater Merops (Aerops) albicollis (April-Oct): first seen 18th April, then small numbers until 27th, since when abundant.
- Blue-cheeked Bee-eater Merops superciliosus (Oct-April): large numbers present March and April and breeding suspected. Last seen in the area 10th May, but abundant on reed islands on the Lake well into July.
- Singing Bush-lark Mirafra cantillans (Sept-April): first noted by the Hopsons a few days prior to 26th April, common thereafter.
- Banded Sand Martin Riparia cincta (June): abundant on islands in the Lake from 28th June.
- Plain-backed Pipit Anthus leucophrys (June-August): widespread from March to date.
- Red-breasted Wheatear Oenanthe heuglini (June): noted in southern Bornu Province from the end of April, but not seen in the Malam'fatori area until late June.
- Pygmy Sunbird Anthreptes (Hedydipna) platura (Oct-April): small numbers to late May.
- Beautiful Sunbird Nectarina pulchella (Mar-Oct): abundant early March and April, smaller numbers subsequently.
- Yellow-breasted Bunting Emberiza flaviventris (July-Aug): seen occasionally March and April, perhaps a scarce resident.
- Rock Bunting Fringillaria tahapisi (June-Oct): first seen 3rd May, but scarce thereafter until mid-June, since when numerous.

RINGING OF ETHIOPIAN SPECIES.

Between 7th March and 31st May 4,367 birds of 70 Ethiopian species were ringed. Of these five Lesser Blue-eared Starlings Lamprotornis (Lamprocolius) chloropterus were new to the area.

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