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LITTLE GULL AT TARKWA, LAGOS:

A SPECIES NEW TO NIGERIA.

Following a night of violent squalls from the south-west, I found an obviously tired Little Gull Larus minutus on lighthouse Beach, Tarkwa on 19th January 1969. On the ground it looked remarkably like a worn Black Tern Chlidonias nigra but in flight, the familiar black zig-zag across the wings, black tipped tail and head cap left no doubt as to its identity. Unfortunately it went straight out to sea and I was unable to get a full description.

However, on 25th January, I found it again associating with C. nigra around the eastern break water. Like them, it was tame allowing observation at a few feet. Its plumage was extremely worn and it appeared to be in arrested moult, perhaps in reaction to a rough passage to Nigeria. A fully grey mantle and white central tail feathers indicated that it was a sub-adult rather than a 1st winter bird. The bird reappeared on 9th and 16th February and was clearly regaining its health by the last date as new feathers were showing on the wings.

Confusion of this species with Kittiwake Rissa tridactyla or Sabine's Gull Xema sabinii is possible but both these can be ruled out on size alone, not to mention the black head cap. The record is the first for Nigeria and apparently the most southerly (and easterly) in West Africa. Normal winter distribution does not extend beyond Morocco (Etcheocopar, R.D. and Hue, 1967 The Birds of North Africa, London: Oliver & Boyd).

D. I. M. Wallace.

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HERRING GULLS AT TARKWA, LAGOS:

A SPECIES NEW TO NIGERIA.

The flock of migrant and/or wintering Lesser Black-backed Gulls Larus fuscus that feeds in the Lagos harbour and roosts on lighthouse Beach, Tarkwa is well known. During the 1968/69 winter, I was able to approach it closely on most of my thirty visits to Tarkwa. On 2nd February 1969, I noticed among its 200 members three gulls which appeared rather bigger and paler mantled than the rest. One I soon lost in the throng but two remained visible up to and during the flocks departure which occurred when I was still about 50 yards away. With the sun well to the side, the birds were well lit and through 9 x 35 glasses, I was able to see the flight pattern of the birds and make a comparison with that of the others. This confirmed the slightly larger size and distinctly paler mantle and upper wing plumage. In addition the white mirror area on the wing tips

were very noticeable and differently set. The flock landed, this time with one of the birds in full view on the sea edge. Again I approached to within about 50 yards and was able to finally confirm my suspicion that it was a Herring Gull Larus argentatus. I also found its one certain companion nearby but inside the flock. This bird was clearly a sub-adult having mottled wing-coverts and the fact that the other had a dark mark on the bill suggested that it was not completely mature either. The same two birds were present on 9th February and a single bird, probably the elder of the two, remained in the area until 23rd March.

These records of Herring Gulls are the first for Nigeria and are based on the following field comparison with both adult and immature L.fuscus: bills heavier-looking, heads whiter, larger and apparently held up more, mantles distinctly paler than those of L. f. graellsii, being dark grey rather than slate in tone, and obviously so compared to those of L.f.fuscus (both races present on several occasions), wing coverts paler (as mantles) and wing mirrors on outer primaries showing more white, size (on ground and in flight) slightly but distinctly larger than most fuscus, wings appearing broader in flight. Clearly it is worth inspecting any flock of gulls in Nigeria for this species. What race of argentatus was involved above is not easy to deduce. The strongly yellow feet clearly exclude a. argentatus and the size and dark mantle indicate one of the N.W.African or Mediterranean forms rather than those from Fennoscandia or Siberia. The assumption that they were a. atlantis is however dangerous (though Bannerman, D.A., 1953, Birds of West and Equatorial Africa, vol.1.) records that the race does reach Angola).

D. I. M. Wallace.

White, C.M.N. (1965, A Revised Check List of African Non-passerine Birds, Lusaka, Zambia), states under Larus argentatus houglini; "Some form also visits Senegal and Gambia, generally assumed to be L.a.atlantis Dwight, which is paler above and has a wing 417-50 against 450-75mm., but none have been examined to verify the form

Ed.

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CRESTED GUINEA FOWL IN GAMBARI FOREST RESERVE.

On 24th October 1968, I saw a flock of eight to ten guinea fowl in Gambari Forest Reserve 20 miles south of Ibadan. They were in a block of forest where a road survey is currently in progress about half a mile from the main Ijebu-Ode road.

It is assumed they were Guttera edouardi, the Crested Guinea Fowl, since this is the only species of forest guinea fowl in this part of West Africa. It was difficult to see the birds clearly because of the thickness of the vegetation, but the black and white speckling of the plumage and the red colour on the head were quite obvious. The flock ran along the ground, making cackling noises, and then flew above the shrub layer out of sight.

The Crested Guinea Fowl appears to be an uncommon species. Bannerman (1953, Birds of West and Equatorial Africa, Vol.1, p.336) records it from only four localities in Nigeria, one of these being Olokomeji Forest Reserve, 25-30 miles north