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BIRDS OBSERVED ON VICTORIA ISLAND, LAGOS.

J. B. Heigham.

In this paper it is proposed to include some remarks concerning birds noted in two previous articles (Bull. Niger. Orn. Soc. 5(18):33-37 and 5(20):91-93), to record some further species observed since October 1968 and species noted in previous publications by other authors, and to add a check list in the form of a bar graph indicating the frequency of occurrence of the species positively identified up to December, 1969.

NOTES ON PREVIOUS OBSERVATIONS.

Further observations, discussions with other observers and further consultation of various published works have led to a revision of a number of previously held views and the modifications are recorded in this section.

White-faced Tree Duck Dendrocygna viduata: much more numerous in 1969 wet season than previous year. Up to 50 seen in May and June, mainly in rain pools behind Apese Village.

Black Kite Milvus migrans: on 3rd March, 1969, F. Walsh observed a Black Kite landing in a large tree in the clump of mixed vegetation at the N.E. corner of the Island in which there was a predator's nest. On 23rd November, J.P. Gee saw a pair, one of which was on the nest in the same tree. On 6th December the pair were present in the vicinity of the nest during the afternoon and at mid-day on 7th one bird perched on the nest for a brief period. Both birds were perched in the same tree for a long period late in the afternoon. The behavior of these birds in relation to the nest is intriguing as it seems hardly likely that this species would breed in this area at this time of year.

Water Thick-knee Oedonemus vermiculatus: this species was first identified mainly on the strength of leg colour (yellowish-green rather than greenish-yellow) but subsequent observations throughout the year all over the uninhabited parts of the island and discussion with other observers leads to the conclusion that it is the Senegal Thick-knee O. senegalensis which is constantly present and not O. vermiculatus.

Painted Snipe Rostratula benghalensis: a pair of these birds was first seen in 1969 in a drainage ditch near Kuramo Waters on 30th March (two months earlier than in 1968), and a single bird in the same place on 10th April. None were subsequently seen in this ditch but a single bird was seen on 29th April and 14th May in the ditch further west in which this species had brought up its young in 1967 and 1968. No bird was seen in the original drainage ditch after 14th May but in July and August both adult and young were seen in the marshy areas which appear on the sandflats in the rainy season behind Apese.

Kittlitz's Sand Plover Leucopolijs pecuarius: This species has been seen in every month except December. On 2nd August, 1968, J.P. Gee surprised a bird at a nest. While he was still some distance away the plover vigorously kicked sand over its eggs before running off. The eggs were then found to be almost completely covered, and hidden, with sand.

Common Sandpiper Actitis hypoleucos: seen every month except June. Not seen between 8th May and 3rd July, 1969, when two birds re-appeared. (Absent 1st May to 14th July, 1968).

Green Sandpiper Tringa ochropus: Recorded every month. Never numerous but more frequent September to February.

Wood Sandpiper Tringa glareola: seen every month except June. After 9th May not seen again on the Island until early July 1969, when one bird was seen by J.P.Gee. On 14th May two large parties of small birds were seen flying generally North over Lagos Harbour which, from their erratic flight and volatile formation, appeared to be Wood Sandpipers.

Curlew Numenius arquatus: single birds were seen on several occasions in 1968/69 dry season, usually alone but sometimes in company with Numenius phaeopus. One bird was seen by J.P.Gee in August 1969.

Whimbrel Numenius phaeopus: present throughout the year but the dramatic increase of numbers in June 1968, was not repeated in June 1969.

Temminck's Courser Cursorius temminckii: a few of these birds remained on Victoria Island until mid-November 1968; one was seen on 11th January 1969, but none were observed again until June 1969, when up to six were seen on the sandflats in that month and July. Last seen, two 16th November 1969. Certainly less numerous in 1969 than in 1968.

Long-tailed Nightjar Scotornis climacurus: on 11th January 1969, a female was disturbed from two eggs laid on the sand at the foot of a dead shrub in the area behind Apese Village. A male and a female were constantly in attendance at subsequent visits but the female appeared to be the one which sat on the eggs. On 25th January the two eggs had been hatched and on 26th the fledglings had been moved about one foot north of the original spot. Photographs were taken on 27th January. When the site was visited again on 30th January, there was no sign of fledglings or parents and all that was left was a piece of egg shell. There were no signs of disturbance. On about 6th May 1969, J.P.Gee discovered a female which had laid one egg on the sand right beside a footpath about 300 yards east of the last site. No bird was seen at or near the nest after 8th May and by the 11th it appeared to be deserted.

Whinchat Saxicola rubetra: at least two birds regularly present from December 1968 to March 1969. Last noted 29th March 1969, until reappearance on 6th November of three birds. In November and December 1969, there were numerous sightings in different parts of the island.

Woodchat Lanius senator: single birds of the Corsican race regularly seen January to April 1969. Last seen 13th April 1969.

Senegal Firefinch Lagonosticta senegalensis: the bird previously recorded as this species on Victoria Island is not L. senegalensis but the Bar-breasted Firefinch L. rufopicta.

Combassou Hypochera Sp: the species previously identified as H. chalybeata was almost certainly not that species as all adult males in breeding dress subsequently seen by J.P.Gee and J.B.H. have had brown feathers in primaries and brown tails with darker centre feathers. Bills vary from horn to flesh colour, legs are generally pink. No particular gloss has been noticed (the birds have usually been ob-

served in the evening in or near the residential area) and neither of us feels sufficiently confident to identify the species.

SPECIES NOT PREVIOUSLY RECORDED.

The following notes result largely from observations made between June 1968 and December 1969; these include only those species whose identification is certain. Species previously recorded for Victoria Island by other observers notably F. Sander, are also included in this section in order to provide as full evidence as possible to support the appended check list.

Long-tailed Shag Phalacrocorax africanus: A single juvenile seen flying over various parts of the Island three times in May 1969, generally departing west along the shore line. This species was frequently seen at Apapa Marshes in the period March to July 1969.

Black-headed Heron Ardea melanocephala: recorded by Sander in January, June and October "near Kuramo Waters". Not observed 1967 to 1969.

Black Heron Melanophox ardesiaca: two birds seen by J.P.Gee overhead near Kuramo Waters in July 1968. Single birds also seen at Apapa Marshes January to May 1969. (Gee, J.P. Bull. Niger. Orn. Soc. 6(21):35).

Yellow-billed Egret Mosophox intermedius: pairs seen in mangrove swamp and at rainpools on sandflats during May and June 1969. On two occasions Great White Egrets Casmerodius alba were also present. A number of M. intermedius had been observed frequently from January 1969, onwards in the Apapa Marshes and it seems likely that these birds were visitors from that community.

Reef Heron Demigretta gularis: single birds seen December, January, February and June in mangrove swamp, usually in company with Little Egrets Egretta garzetta. Also frequent at Apapa Marshes.

Cattle Egret Bubulcus ibis: a pair seen in mangrove swamp once only in November 1968, and one bird on 27th October 1969. In November 1969, J.P.Gee saw a small flock of 8-10 near the International School at the Western end of the Island.

Squacco Heron Ardeola ralloides: One bird seen once only on 16th June 1969, flying over sandflats towards mangrove swamps. Numerous at Apapa Marshes in the dry season.

Night Heron Nycticorax nycticorax: Single birds seen occasionally in May, June and July. Frequent at Apapa Marshes.

Red-necked Little Bittern Ixobrychus minutus: Single sightings in May and June. Juvenile bird only seen by J.B.H. Regularly seen at Apapa Marshes.

African Dwarf Bittern Ardeirallus sturmi: Recorded by Sander as seen only three times from April to June "at Kuramo Waters." Not observed 1967 to 1969.

Wood Ibis Ibis ibis: One bird seen in mangrove swamp 20th and 21st January 1969. Possibly the same bird seen later at Apapa Marshes.

Osprey Pandion haliaetus: Single birds seen in March, August, September, October and November.

Peregrine Falcon Falco peregrinus: One bird only seen in March 1969. Single birds have also been observed on several occasions during the dry season over Apapa Marshes and perched in a casurina tree near the cathedral on the Marina, Lagos Island, from where forays were made over the Harbour.

Kestrel Falco tinnunculus: A pair and single birds frequently seen over the sand-flats from December 1968 to early May 1969, but not observed again until 30th November since when one bird has been seen on several occasions.

Grey Kestrel Falco ardiosacus: Constantly present in the same general area as F. tinnunculus from August 1968. to March 1969.

Palm Nut Vulture Gypohierax angolensis: Seen once only in May 1968, over Lagos Harbour.

West African Harrier Hawk Gymnogenys typicus: One bird seen in March, June and November 1969. This species is frequently seen over the secondary forest and cultivated area beyond Igbosere Village to the east of the island.

Pallid Harrier Circus macrourus: Recorded by M.F. Forrester in March 1969. Also recorded by Sander as "seen once only in December by Sir Hugo Marshall, east of Kuramo Waters." The latter is just outside our area of reference.

African Crake Crecopsis oeraria: First seen November 1968; a single bird flying north across drainage ditch behind Apese. A few evening later Mr. & Mrs. J.B.H. came across 4 very small juvenile crakes, dark brown in colour, crying loudly as they made their way west along the bottom of this drainage ditch. The fledglings' cry was answered from a patch of grass about 50 yards north of the ditch and shortly afterwards as we watched a dark bird (thought to be C. oeraria but not seen clearly enough for undeniable identification) crept out of the grass, flopped into the ditch beside the place where the fledglings had disappeared into the reeds and all cries ceased. It was by then nearly dark and we did not flush the birds. They were not seen again in that spot on subsequent visits. J.P.G. found the bird regular and common in the same area February to July 1969, and on 26th October W.H. Houston and J.B.H. observed an adult (female?) and chick in similar circumstances to those described above in a nearby shallow drain.

Black Crake Limnecorax flavirostra: A pair seen with two juveniles once only on 6th June 1969, in the marshy area near Maroko Village. The conditions in the marsh and mangrove swamp to the east of Victoria Island are such as to lead one to expect to see L. flavirostra there at any time of the year.

Lesser Moorhen Gallinula angulata: Seen by Mr. & Mrs. J.B.H. near Maroko in June and by D.I.M. Wallace and M.F. Forester in July 1969.

European Stone Curlew Oedionemus oedionemus: One bird seen on 12th February 1969, in company with six O. senegalensis. The chief differences noted at the time were:

- (a) White stripe on closed wing of O. oedionemus.
- (b) General darker colour.
- (c) Legs, area around eye and base of bill yellower than O. senegalensis whose leg colour was similar to, but lighter than that of a Green-shank Glottis nebularis present at the same time. (See also under note on O. vermiculatus above.) When all the birds flew off together no differences in wing pattern were noted.

Lily Trotter Actophilornis africanus: Single birds seen in marshy area near Igboere Village only on 26th & 29th May and 1st June, and behind Apese in August 1969. This is another bird one might expect to see regularly in the area. The nearest place where large numbers have been constantly seen is Apapa Marshes.

Lesser Golden Plover Pluvialis dominica: Seen by J.P.G. and J.B.H. on 15th, 23rd and 30th November 1969, near Igboere in company with Grey Plovers. The bird was definitely smaller and more slightly built than the nearby Grey Plovers, and the bill was proportionately smaller. The upperparts were liberally spangled with golden. The underwings in flight were uniform buff or greyish-buff without contrasting axillaries. Although a specimen should be secured to confirm the existence of this species in Nigeria, we feel certain that it was P. dominica rather than apricaria, and we believe it likely that it was of the Siberian race, which has more golden spangling in non-breeding plumage than the North American race. Elgood et al (1966) mention several observations at Lagos during the winters of 1961-62 and 1962-63, and the belief that these records were also probably of the Siberian race.

Senegal Plover Stephanibyx lugubris: Two birds seen by J.P.G. on 2nd August 1968, and eight by J.B.H. on 10th June 1969.

Jack Snipe Lymnocyptes minima: Single birds seen feeding in drainage ditches near residential area on north side of island in company with Common, Green and Wood Sandpipers on 22nd January and 13th February 1969.

Curlew Sandpiper Erolia testacea: Single birds seen with other palaeartic waders in March 1969.

Bar-tailed Godwit Limosa lapponica: Pairs and single birds seen on various dates in October and November 1969, in the mangrove swamp and marshy area east of the island by J.P.G., J.B.H. and M.F.F.

Ruff Philomachus pugnax: Single birds seen in August, September and October 1968.

Royal Tern Sterna maxima: One or two birds seen from time to time over Kuramo waters. Recorded in January, June and August.

Spotted Pigeon Columba guinea: Single birds and pairs occasionally seen on sandflats near residential area. Recorded for February, March and August. (see also Gee, J.P. 1969).

Niger Mourning Dove Streptopelia decipiens: First seen 12th February 1969, but subsequently recorded for March, April, May, June, July, August and November 1969. The general area in which this species has been seen is on the sandflats on the north side of the island and among the bushes along the side of Five Cowrie Creek, frequently consorting with S. semitorquata from which it is fairly easily distinguished in company by its generally lighter colouration, white edge to black half collar and white outer tail feathers in flight. In the period May to July one pair gave the appearance of courtship but no nest was discovered. (One S. decipiens was also seen beside the Apapa Marshes on 22.6.69). In spite of the distance from their normal habitat, there is no doubt about the identification of this species. (see also Gee, J.P. 1969).

Grey Parrot Psittacus erithacus: One bird seen by M.F.F. and J.B.H. on 27th November 1969, flying from direction of mangrove swamp towards Apese calling loudly. This single bird may well have escaped from captivity but there was no doubt as to its identity or the freedom of its flight as it passed close overhead.

White-faced Owl Ptilopsis leucotis: Seen in every month at dusk or after dark in the residential area.

African Barn Owl Tyto alba: Seen occasionally in much the same area as previous species. Recorded for January, February, March, August, October and December.

Grey Plantain Eater Crinifer piscator: Single birds seen flying over the island only twice in November 1968, and January 1969. Often seen east of Igboere.

Simple Leaf-love Pyrrhurus simplex: Recorded only for June and July; single birds in mangrove bushes at eastern end of island.

Spotted Flycatcher Muscicapa striata: Recorded only for November and December for Victoria Island but also seen in Lagos area in considerable numbers December 1968 to January 1969, and November/December 1969.

Senegal Puff-back Flycatcher Batis senegalensis: Recorded by Sander: "A female was obtained in a small tree in sandy grassland at the edge of Kuramo Waters". The date appears to have been May. Not observed 1967-69.

Blue Fairy Flycatcher Erannornis longicaudata: Seen only once by both J.P.G. and J.B.H. on 13th April 1969, by Kuramo Waters where it might be expected to be frequent.

Kurrichane Thrush Turdus libyanus: Recorded only for June and July in the residential area. It seems likely that the bird is present, at any rate throughout the rainy season, especially around the Federal Palace Hotel where it is probably resident. This area is rarely visited for bird watching.

Nightingale Luscinia megarhynchos: Recorded by Sander: "A specimen was obtained in dense scrub near the beach, and other birds have been heard in January singing very quietly in the mangrove swamps around Kuramo Waters!...." Also seen and heard calling by J.P.G. during November and December 1969.

Melodious Warbler Hippolias polyglotta: Recorded only for February 1969.

Willow Warbler Phylloscopus trochilus: Seen by J.P.G. and J.B.H. December 1969, in N.E. corner of the island.

Grey-backed Camaroptera Camaroptera brevicaudata: Seen in July, November and December 1969, in a mixed clump of vegetation at N.E. corner of the Island.

Lesser Grey Shrike Lanius minor: Specimen of sub-adult obtained 14th November 1969.

Red-backed Shrike Lanius collurio: Female seen by J.P.G. and J.B.H. near Apese 9th November 1969.

Gambian Puff Back Shrike Dryoscopus gambensis: Seen in July, November and December 1969, in a mixed clump of vegetation at N.E. corner of the island. Both male and female observed.

Pied Crow Corvus albus: Two birds were seen on the roof of a house in Ozumba Mbadiwe Street on the early evening of 27th April 1969. There had been a heavy storm the previous day with a strong wind from the N.E. and these birds were probably blown down from the Ikorodu area over the lagoon. This is believed to be the first sighting for the Lagos area.

Yellow White Eye Zosterops senegalensis: Seen frequently in residential area. Recorded for February, May, June, July, September and November.

Carmelite Sunbird Chalcomitra fuliginosa: Recorded from January to March and August.

Mouse-brown Sunbird Anthreptes gabonica: Seen only once in December 1968.

West African Little Weaver Sitagra monacha: Recorded by Sander: "Found only in scrubby grassland behind Victoria Beach. Very sparse." He also notes that the specimen collected in 1952 behind the beach and taken to the British Museum was the first recorded occurrence of this species in Nigeria since 1902. Not recorded for Victoria Island since 1952.

Yellow-crowned Bishop Euplectes afra: First recorded when a pair was seen on 1st June 1969, by J.P.G. and J.B.H.. Later in June, July and August J.P.G. saw parties of ca. 30 in the grassy area behind apese. Parties of up to 30 with males in eclipse subsequently seen in October and November 1969.

Blue-billed Mannikin Spermestes poensis: Recorded only for February and December 1969. In view of the constant presence of S. cucullatus and the frequent intermingling in parties of these two species elsewhere in Lagos one would have expected it to be recorded more often.

Warbling Silverbill Euodice cantans: Up to six seen in May and August 1969 in grassy area behind Apese. In later months as many as 20 have been seen together in the same area.

NOTES ON STATUS OF SPECIES IDENTIFIED.

The full list of species positively identified on Victoria Island is attached as an appendix in the form of a bar graph indicating the frequency of occurrence so far recorded.

Ninety nine (67%) of the species recorded are non-passerine and forty eight (33%) are passerines.

Thirty eight (26%) are palaeartic migrants and the majority of these 27 species or 70% are aquatic birds.

Thirty five (24%) of all species are recorded as infrequent or rare in two months or less of the year.

Only nineteen species (13%) are known to breed on the island, though it is probable that the following 22 also do so:

Non-Passerine

- Black Crake
- African Button Quail
- Senegal Laughing Dove
- Red-billed Wood Dove
- White-faced Owl
- Malachite Kingfisher
- Senegal Kingfisher
- Palm Swift

Passerine

- Buckley's Bushlark
- Plain-backed Pipit
- Scarlet-spectacled Flycatcher
- Kurrichane Thrush
- Grey-backed Camaroptera
- Barbary Shrike
- Gambian Puff Back Shrike
- Splendid Glossy Starling
- Yellow White Eye
- Collared Sunbird
- Yellow-crowned Bishop
- Warbling Silverbill
- Bar-breasted Firefince & Combassou

These figures point to Victoria Island's being a kind of staging post which is frequently visited but is not highly populated with resident and breeding species. The surprising thing is, in view of its small area and generally inhospitable nature, that the island is visited by so many species.

The nature of a staging post seems to be shared by two other parts of Lagos which are also rich in aquatic birds viz the Apapa/Iganmu Marshes (numbers of whose Ardeidae population clearly commute to Victoria Island) and the wireless station lying behind the bund between Ikoyi Park and Turnbull Road on Ikoyi Island.

I am particularly grateful to John Gee who suggested many sensible modifications to the original draft, especially the form of the appended check list, and contributed so much of the material. I should also like to acknowledge the suggestions and assistance contributed - largely unknown to themselves - by those with whom I have discussed Victoria Island's birds, notably J.H. Elgood, R.H. Parker, D.I.M. Wallace and F. Walsh.

BIRDS RECORDED ON VICTORIA ISLAND, LAGOS.

		Numerous <u>=====</u>	Regular -----	Infrequent or rare ...									
		Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Long-tailed Shag	<i>Phalacrocorax africanus</i>					...							
Grey Heron	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>												
Black-headed Heron	<i>Ardea melanoccephala</i>	..					..				..
Purple Heron	<i>Pyrherodia purpurea</i>												
Black Heron	<i>Melanophoyx ardosiaca</i>												
Great White Heron	<i>Casmerodius albus</i>	..					..	..	..	..
Yellow-billed Egret	<i>Mesophoyx intermedius</i>					..	..	..	..	..
Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzotta</i>											..	..
Reef Heron	<i>Demigretta gularis</i>	..	..								
Cattle Egret	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>	..	..				..						..
Squacco Heron	<i>Ardeola ralloides</i>						..					..
Green-backed Heron	<i>Butorides striatus</i>						..						
Night Heron	<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>												
Red-necked Little Bittern	<i>Ixobrychus minutus</i>					..	..	..	..
African Dwarf Bittern	<i>Adeirallus sturnii</i>					..	..	..	..
Wood Ibis	<i>Ibis ibis</i>				..	..	..	..	
White-faced Tree Duck	<i>Dendrocygna viduata</i>	..											
Osprey	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>		..	..					..	..	..	..	..
Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>		..	..					..	..	..	..	..
Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	..	..	..	..	..		
Grey Kestrel	<i>Falco ardosiacus</i>	..	..	..	..	..						..	..
Black Kite	<i>Milvus migrans</i>								..	..	..	..	..
Black-shouldered Kite	<i>Elanus caeruleus</i>					..			..	..
Palm-nut Vulture	<i>Gypohierax angolensis</i>								..	..	
Eritrean Shikra	<i>Accipiter badius</i>					..							
West African Harrier Hawk	<i>Gymnogenys typicus</i>		..	..							
Pallid Harrier	<i>Circus macrorus</i>		..	..			..					..
African Crake	<i>Crecoptis ogranaria</i>	..	..								
Black Crake	<i>Limnecorax flavirostra</i>												
Lesser Moorhen	<i>Gallinula angulata</i>						..	..			

