



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



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NOTES.THE BLUE PLANTAIN EATER AT ABUJA.

The Blue plantain eater Corythaecola cristata has been recorded in scattered localities throughout the West African forest zone (Bannerman, 1953, 1 : 559-560). It is a common species in Ilaro Forest Reserve near Abeokuta (Button, 1964, Bull.Nig.Orn.Soc. 4 : 12-27). Although typically associated with forest, Elgood (1964, Bull.Nig.Orn.Soc. 1 (1):13-25) states that it also occurs in the savanna - presumably in forest relicts. Observations on a flock of about six of these birds in the forest on the south side of Zuma rock near Abuja (9° 11'E., 7° 11'N.) suggests that the blue plantain eater can survive in small isolated patches of forest. This forest, less than a square mile in extent, has a structure similar to that of true forest 200 miles to the south although many of the larger trees are savanna species. There is a dense canopy and several Musanga trees, which are favoured by the plantain eater, grow in the forest.

'Forest relicts' or 'outliers' are an interesting feature of the southern Guinea savanna (Jones, 1963, J.Ecol. 51 : 415-434). Most of them are small in area and separated from each other by woodland savanna. A more detailed knowledge of the distribution of the blue plantain eater, and other species of 'forest' birds, will show how successfully these species have survived in isolated patches of forest (see, for example, Wells & Walsh, 1969, Bull. Nig.Orn.Soc. 6 : 1-25). Mona nonkeys Cercopithecus mona were observed in the Abuja forest and they have been seen also in the swamp forest north of the Niger river near the Kainji Dam. It is unlikely that these nonkeys move from one forest relict to another, and if the population died out it would not be replaced by new immigrants. In contrast, large birds like the blue plantain eater may be capable of moving from forest to forest if necessary. Patterns of movement within and between relict forests might show how these 'forest' species - birds and mammals - have managed to survive in the guinea savanna.

D. G. D. Happold.

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INTERNATIONAL WILDFOWL CENSUS

Wildfowl counts during the 1969/70 winter were virtually restricted to the Nguru area. This is probably the main wintering area for migrant duck in Nigeria but it is regretted that information was not available from the Maiduguri and Sokoto lakes. In both of these areas swamp drainage and the cultivation of rice and wheat is taking place and it would be interesting to know the effect of these measures on wildfowl.