



West African Ornithological Society
Société d'Ornithologie de l'Ouest
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is probably harder to become proficient at than the feeding habits of most passerines, which may help to explain the long parental association.

The conditions under which the two broods were raised were different. When the first brood fledged no significant rain had fallen and e.g. butterflies in the garden were scarce (independent butterfly trapping confirms this). Rain fell with increasing regularity during May and presumably the availability of suitable prey increased (certainly butterflies did). When the second brood fledged it will have been in the middle of the 'deep' rains, when the difficulties of a young bird learning to fend for itself are probably even further increased.

2. In species with obvious sexual dimorphism it seems uncommon for the more conspicuous bird to share equally in brooding on an open nest. The basically brown female was relatively inconspicuous even when the leaves were absent; the black and white male was much more easily seen even when sitting still, and at least this individual advertised himself at the nest by voice and the length of time he took settling down, turning his white breast in various directions. Presumably predators present little problem, (a) because of the almost complete isolation of the tree, thus virtually barring snakes and squirrels, and (b) because of the fierce appearance of the birds - crested and with bright yellow eye and aggressive behaviour.

INTERESTING OBSERVATIONS IN NIGERIA

By

D.I.M. Wallace

Ostrich *Struthio camelus*

On 9th December 1970 in a forest reserve in the centre of the North-East State, I saw three adult male and one female Ostriches.

This constitutes the only recent record of the species in Nigeria.

Brown Booby *Sula leucogaster*

On 11th and 12th July 1970, an immature booby was present off the breakwaters of the Lagos Lagoon mouth. During the first day it fished continually in the interface of sea and lagoon, a water area always full of fish. On the second morning it had ceased feeding and probably departed at mid-day.

The bird was clearly smaller than the European Gannet Sula bassana, being very agile and at times planing about like a shearwater. Its plumage was rather uniform, overall brown with a paler shade on the secondary coverts and distinctly lighter areas in the centre of the underwing and belly giving a faint indication of the adult plumage pattern. No speckling was visible in the field.

Bannerman (1953) indicates that this species is abundant around Fernando Po but gave no definite record for Nigeria. Sander (1956) mentions three between June and November, all in or outside the lagoon mouth. This is therefore only the fourth record for Nigeria.

Pochard Aythya ferina

On 7th December 1970, I found an immature drake Pochard Aythya ferina on a small pool near the more northerly of the two river bridges about 15 miles south of Kano. I was able to approach within 20 yards and note in particular the chestnut head and dark chest contrasting with a grey body.

Reference to Bannerman (1953) and Elgood (1966) shows this to be the second most southerly record in Nigeria.

Lappet-faced Vulture Aegyptus tracheliotos

On 8th December 1970 about ten miles west of Potiakum, I saw a large blackish vulture sitting on top of a dead tree. Since I was in a moving car, little detail could be seen but I certainly saw a naked area of dark pink flesh on the side of the head. On the same day I had ample opportunity to compare my impression of the bird with three other vultures, namely the White-headed Trigonoceps occipitalis, the White-backed Gyps bengalensis and the Sociable Neophron monachus. It was none of these.

On the next day (9th December) I was set afoot by a car breakdown 28 miles south of Damaturu. The country was largely forest reserve and vultures and other raptors were very prominent. In the course of journeys to and from Damaturu, I saw two large vultures which recalled the bird of the previous day. One of these afforded excellent flight views at close range for five minutes and was undoubtedly a Lappet-faced Vulture Aegyptus tracheliotos. The identification was based on the following description:-

Size larger than any other species present (including Ruppell's Griffon Gyps ruppellii with noticeably wider wing-span, square wing-set and short tail; plumage blackish-brown relieved only by pale chest ruff, heavily-streaked whitish underparts and mottled whitish leg coverts which contrasted with dark wing linings, forehead and noticeably heavy bill greyish-flesh contrasting with dark neck.

The pattern of the underparts (particularly the streaking) immediately distinguished the bird from all other vultures present.

It seems clear that this species may be more common in N. Nigeria than published references indicate. A.J. Hopson considered it resident

and frequent at Mallamfatori and there are records from three or four other places. It may well be commoner than ornithologists in the North-East State !

Collared Pratincole Pratincola nuchalis

On 5th September 1970, I saw what I first took to be a white-rumped petrel near the smaller breakwater at Tarkwa, Lagos. On the 6th I re-found the bird and another identical to it. On close observation they proved to be immature Collared Pratincoles Pratincola nuchalis, a species normally restricted in West Africa to the rocks of inland rivers.

Apart from their red bills and legs, their plumage was essentially a combination of grey-brown (upperparts and chest), black (flight feathers and tail centre) and white (tail coverts, tail base and sides). Their resemblance in pouring rain to petrels was uncanny.

Sander (1956) mentioned occurrences at Lagos in September and October 1949. These are therefore only the third and fourth records for coastal S.W. Nigeria.

Collared Dove Streptopelia roseogrisea

During the early morning of 9th December, 1970, I journeyed from Maiduguri to the forest reserve south of Damaturu. On three occasions during this journey, at Beni Sheik near Darkalwa and north of Gujba, I saw a species of dove new to me in Nigeria. All views were of birds in flight only but in the first and second cases, they came within a few yards of me and the plumage pattern was therefore clear. I was also able to compare them with at least six other species of dove within minutes or two hours at the most and describe them as follows:

Size between Turtle Dove Streptopelia turtur and Niger Mourning Dove Streptopelia decipiens, flight set and action closest to latter but less bulky and faster, plumage pale and lacking definite marks, being generally buff with a greyish or mauve bloom at certain angles, flight pattern distinct from all other species with wing showing marked contrast of blackish ended primaries with greyish wing coverts and linings and undertail showing a broad white terminal band contrasting with dark but not black base, head uniform with body, short black collar mark on neck.

I find the identification of certain Nigerian doves troublesome but I am in no doubt that these birds (four altogether, two at Beni Sheik) were Collared Doves Streptopelia roseogrisea. In all three localities, they were in their typical (European) niche of cultivation near human habitation.

Bannerman (1953) is not specific about the occurrence of this bird in Nigeria but it is in fact common between Sokoto and Lake Chad. The above records were made about 80 miles S. of that latitude.

Acacia Warbler Apalis pulchella

On 8th December 1970 in an acacia thicket about 20 miles south of Potiskum on the road to Maiduguri I saw what I first took to be a yellowish Phylloscopus. Closer views made it clear that while it was a warbler, it was new to me. The following description is based on a field sketch:-

Small Phylloscopus-like warbler, shape differing only in spikier bill and longer, graduated tail; plumage essentially greenish-grey above relieved by yellowish around eye, slightly darker wings and tail feathers which also showed striking white tips, underparts apparently wholly warm yellow, bill brown, legs reddish flesh.

The bird was feeding quietly in canopy foliage and searching hard for insects.

Bannerman (1953) is not specific about the occurrence in Nigeria of the Acacia Warbler Apalis pulchella but reference to that work and Mackworth-Praed and Grant (1953) left me in no doubt that it was this species that I had seen. That it does occur in Nigeria is shown by several records made on the western side of Lake Chad by A.J. Hopson but its occurrence near Potiskum represents a range extension of about 160 miles W.S.W.

NOTES

A SPECIES NEW TO NIGERIA

RED-BACKED SHRIKE Lanius collurio AT LAGOS

The bird was first seen 23. November. 1970 on Victoria Island and collected 26 November.

DESCRIPTION: Immature male. Length 6 3/4 inches. Upperparts: Forehead and crown brown speckled with darker brown, buff and rufous. Nape brown without speckling. Back and scapulars rufous barred with dark brown edged with buff. Rump similar but slightly greyer brown. Upper tail coverts like back but with more buff. Coverts extend 1 3/4" down tail. Retrices: Upper side dark brown, slightly rufous. Tips worn but three outermost pairs have narrow buffy-white tips with narrow dark brown subterminal bands. Outer web of outer retrices cream colored. Next three pairs have narrow cream edging on outer edge, this light edging decreasing in length inwards. Tail slightly graduated, outermost retrices being 5 mm. shorter than worn middle pair. Middle retrices become narrower towards tip, presenting a slightly pointed appearance,