



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



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Sedge Warbler, Acrocephalus schoenobaenus. Since Elgood et al. (1966, Ibis 108: 84-116) reported, it has become clear that the Sedge Warbler is a much more common and widespread visitor to West Africa. It has previously been reported from Borgu in the spring of 1968 Wells and Walsh (op. cit.). Additional records are given below.

Several on Niger river banks between Yelwa-Sakace (north of Borgu) on 5th December 1968.

Several on patches of sudd in the Foge area of the lake on 26th December 1968.

2, possibly more, on lakeside vegetation, Kainji 1st March 1969.

3 or more in hedge bordering the Niger Club, New Bussa throughout April 1969.

Singles at the New Bussa sewage lagoon on 7th and 22nd April, and on the exceptionally late date of 31st May 1969.

1 at Kainji dams site 2nd May 1969.

2 at Sanchita (near Pategi) on the Niger 29th April 1969 (south of Borgu).

It seems likely that some birds were wintering in the Foge Island area of the Lake and also on the marshy river banks north of Yelwa. There was also clearly a sizeable movement through the area in April with stragglers in May.

Quail Finch, Ortygospiza atricollis. This species was first detected on 10th February 1969. It was subsequently seen or heard on almost every visit to the Kainji dams site until my final visit on 11th October 1969. It was also seen flying over the New Bussa sewage lagoon during July to September and at Agwarra dam in February, June and July. Although it may have been overlooked previously it seems more likely that the formation of the lake caused changes in its distribution pattern in the area.

Localities mentioned in these notes are shown on maps in Wells and Walsh (op. cit.).

NEW DEVELOPMENTS IN WETLAND CONSERVATION

BY

Roy H. Parker

It was with considerable gratification that I read recently a report on the International Conference on the Conservation of Wetlands and Waterfowl held in Iran on February 3rd, 1971.

The article (Wetland Conservation - Shooting Times and Country Magazine 15th May, 1971 by Jeffery Harrison) reports in detail many of recommendations made to the conference, these included the complete protection of several Wetlands of International importance under threat of destruction, as well as oil pollution, sales of pesticides in under-developed countries, wetland research in Africa and the regularization of wild fowling practices throughout Europe, Asia and Africa.

However, the most exciting step forward in wetland conservation occurred in the opening speech of the conference, and I quote from Harrison's article:-

"The conference was opened by HIM Prince Abdorreza, who read a personal message from HIM the Shah. This came to a dramatic conclusion when the Shah, expressing the great conviction of his country that man's natural environment must be protected for the good of all, went with an offer to place one of Iran's wetlands of special global significance in joint trust with a suitable international agency such as the United Nations Organisation, to be conserved for all mankind.

Such a gesture left everyone almost speechless and I certainly would not like to have had to find words adequate to express the feelings of all those present. This fell to Professor Geoffrey Matthews, Honorary Director of the IWRB, who rose to the occasion when he said: "We could not foresee that we were to be present at such an historic moment as this has become. The sheer magnificence of His Imperial Majesty's vision leaves us breathless. Iran has leapt to the forefront of the nations by being the first to take the giant stride of offering to share the sovereignty of a part of her territory with the international community for the purposes of conservation. This will indeed be seen as a turning point in man's endeavour to safeguard his environment."

There could have been no better start for the conference and it was now up to the delegates to finalise the text of the long-awaited convention. The purpose of this convention is that each ratifying state shall submit a list of its wetlands of international significance at the time of signing, which it will safeguard and endeavour to improve in co-operation with other states. If such a wetland is lost under very exceptional circumstances, then that state will endeavour to nominate a suitable replacement."

Harrison then finishes the article:-

"Without doubt conservation history was made at Ramsar, where those concerned with wildfowl showed how to get on together in this world, irrespective of politics or creed or the good of something we all believe in."

One can only hope that the laxidazical approach to wetland conservation in Nigeria may be given a spur by the results of the Ramsar conference, and that the various states conservators re-appraise the situation of areas such as Nguru, and various other localities in the Hadejia valley, as well as several of the major fadamas in North Eastern, North Central, Kano and North Western States, where the wholesale killing and trading in Nigerian protected birds continues, apparently unabated.

Finally one looks with pleasure at the Benue - Plateau State's move to afford complete protection to Nigeria's only breeding colony of the Rosy Pelican Pelecanus onocrotlatus on Wase Rock, even though the colony itself is inaccessible to all but the most experienced mountaineers. The move does, however, show a growing awareness of Nigeria's avifauna and I sincerely hope that the state will sponsor the research required to find out exactly where the pelicans feed during the breeding season (Dampar, on the Benue River has been cited) and really attempt some organised protection for this species at its most vulnerable time (i.e. on the feeding grounds).

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NOTES

TURACOS IN THE BENUE VALLEY

The area through which the Benue River and its tributaries flow contains southern guinea savanna vegetation, with patches of gallery forests along streams and also rain forest to the south and east of Takum and near the Cameroons border, south of Katsina Ala Division. The Turacos are a group of birds more often heard than seen except for the common Grey Plantain Eater. Their distribution follows the vegetation areas which the particular species favour. However, there is considerable overlapping of several species. Here are some notes on distribution of Turacos:

Guinea Turaco, Tauraco persa persa. The typical subspecies is found here. Location: Gallery forests near Benue River at Makurdi; Mkar mountain, near Gboko; southern Tiv areas in the mountains near the Cameroons border, that is, south and southwest of Jato Akaa. Seen also at Bete, 25 miles s.w. of Takum, 12 miles east of Takum; common in the forests around Bissaula (40 miles south of Takum) and eastward from there to Baissa. These last 2 areas are in Saradauna Province, N.E. State. The birds call kwa-kwa-kwa-kwa-kwa-kwa, often in unison. The call is very low-pitched.