



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



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Black-shouldered Kite Elanus caeruleus: One record only, of a solitary bird at close range near Ala on 5th March. It is unlikely that I would overlook this bird, and the assumption is that this rather tree-less area is outside the bird's normal range, at any rate in the dry season.

Swallow-tailed Kite Elanus riocourii: Three records only, of single birds on 19th January and 4th February, and of a party of some 15 on 7th February. All were moving slowly in a NW direction.

Osprey Pandion haliaetus: One by the lake on 6th February. Another seen in Waza on 23rd February.

Lanner Falco biarmicus: The only larger falcon identified, and believed to be quite common generally, although the possibility of some of those seen being the Peregrine, Falco peregrinus, cannot be ruled out.

Kestrel Falco tinnunculus: First seen on 27th October, subsequently becoming very common generally. By February it was the commonest of all migrant birds of prey, perhaps becoming less common after mid-March, but still present on our departure on 28th March.

(Fox Kestrel Falco alopex: A gathering of some 30 at a small fire in the mountains at Rhumsiki (S. of Mokola), N.Cameroun, on 22nd February.)

(Secretary-Bird Sagittarius serpentarius: Our only record is of one in the hills south of Mora, N.Cameroun, on 22nd February.)

to be continued

CROWNED CRANES

An Appeal

This magnificent bird is emblematic of more than sovereignty; it symbolises also wetland conservation, for Crowned Cranes need marshland for nesting.

In temperate countries marsh drainage has destroyed the habitat of many crane species, which have become scarce and even (like America's Whooping Crane) greatly endangered.

In Africa there seems to be little threat. But who can confidently assert that continually expanding human populations will not sooner or later press for marshland reclamation in rural as well as urban areas?

Crowned Cranes, spectacular and unmistakable as they are, faced with few threats other than loss of habitat, are perhaps the ideal ecological indicator species for monitoring wetland.

Request for help: the status of Crowned Cranes

The International Council for Bird Preservation has set up a World Working Group on Cranes. Five people are to cover the three African species.

ANY INFORMATION THAT YOU CAN PROVIDE IMMEDIATELY about the status of Crowned Cranes in Nigeria and West Africa will be greatly appreciated. It will be even better if in addition you can undertake systematic observations over the next twelve months of all cranes encountered during your travels.

If response is favourable it may be possible to organise a national census in Nigeria.

The information needed

- Flock size, locality and date.
- Proportion of obviously immature birds.
- Habitat (particularly whether on cultivated land (crops): on or near actual or potential breeding ground).
- Frequency of occurrence at given locality.
- Roosting and migratory movements.
- Relevant observations about land-use, marsh modification; rain regime and water-table; hunting, mortality; etc.

YEAR-ROUND OBSERVATIONS at a locality will be especially valuable.

Your help is earnestly solicited. Please write to:-

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