



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



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BOB SHARLAND

Although the Editor has already noted the loss of Bob Sharland from the Nigerian scene, it is fitting that some further recognition of his contribution to the Society and to Nigerian Ornithology should appear in the pages of the Bulletin. Bob probably got his first taste for tropical birds while serving with the Army in the Burma campaign. In 1949, only three years after he had been demobilised, Bob came to Nigeria as an accountant with the United Africa Company with whom he remained until 1960. During these years he was stationed in various parts of coastal Nigeria, notably Calabar and Burutu. But for the past twelve years he has been continuously in Kano and, with his wife Jane, has offered generous hospitality to all and sundry but, particularly, to those like myself interested in birds. It was during one of my many visits to the Sharlands that Bob first mooted the idea of starting a Nigerian Ornithological Society. Although the infant, born in 1964, has had its struggles for survival, there is no doubt that its existence and the publication of the Bulletin has done much to direct and co-ordinate the activities of ornithologists, not only in Nigeria, but also elsewhere in West Africa.

In the early years, Hilary Fry undertook all the Society's work but since he left Nigeria for Aberdeen in 1966, Bob has been the Secretary/Treasurer while a number of editors have handled the publication of the Bulletin. Bob's greatest contribution to Nigerian Ornithology has been initiating the ringing scheme in 1957. Such has been the success of the campaign that a total of almost 60,000 birds have now been ringed, nearly half yellow wagtails and a further quarter other Palaearctic Migrants. A formidable fraction of this number have been ringed by Bob himself. To achieve such results has meant devotion to the work that is made all the more praiseworthy when one recalls (as I do) that most of the Kano yellow wagtails were captured in one of the city's main middens just outside the city walls! Every footfall was perilous! It must have been most gratifying to Bob as he compiled the Annual Report for the Bulletin, to be able to note the recoveries, recoveries which have had real importance to Ornithology. But, more than any other single person, he has proved that Palaearctic Migrants are as faithful to wintering areas as they are to breeding haunts. I put this forward as a tentative idea in 1957; shortly afterwards Bob proved it so. Another important result has been to show that at least a majority of the yellow wagtails wintering in Nigeria move almost directly north to breed, whereas many previously had thought a strong western factor to be present in the autumn migration direction. One wonders what will become of the Nigerian ringing scheme now that Bob has gone.

Bob has also several first records for Nigeria to his credit. These include the first Cetti's Warbler in the north and the only known Nigerian record of Prinia leucopogon at Calabar. Although not primarily a nester, he has produced several interesting breeding records and it is hoped that now he is not so fully occupied in ringing, he will find time to publish some of these findings in the Bulletin.

Mention was made earlier of the Sharland house in Kano as a rendezvous for ornithologists. But it went a great deal further than hospitality. Bob has been of very great practical help to people passing through Kano. Chief amongst these I will cite the very great help given to John Ash, James Fergusson-Lees and Hilary Fry on their visits to Mallam Tatori on Lake Chad, and to Bob Dowsett during his prolonged stay in the same area. I hope to be briefly back in Northern Nigeria myself shortly, but to pass through Kano without Bob and Jane there will be a traumatic experience!

The Society owes both of them a great deal and it is fitting we should wish them well in the future. We hope they will get the same sort of satisfaction from their new life in the United Kingdom that they must have had while in Nigeria.

John Elgood

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THE BIRDS OF SOKOTO

by

P. J. Mundy and A. W. Cook

Part 2 Passerines

Buckley's Bush Lark Mirafra rufocinnamomea:

14 sightings: from February to August at (h) (i) and once at (b) in June. Probably resident at (h) where its characteristic "drumming" is heard in August.

Rufous-rumped Bush Lark Mirafra nigricans:

A distinctively coloured black and yellow lark. Seen on 2 occasions at (i) in October and November of different years in groups of 5 and 10. They seem to remain in the area for 2 or 3 weeks only. Serle saw a bird at Zaria in December.