



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



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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.

Chestnut-backed Finch Lark Eremopterix leucotis:

From September to March at (a)(c)(d)(f)(h)(i) and (d) in July. It prefers (h)(i) where it occurs in numbers up to 50, with the sex ratio generally equal. Breeding at (i) in October (Part 3).

Crested Lark Galerida cristata:

Throughout the year at (a)(b)(c)(d) and at (i) in August and November. Very numerous on fadamas and up to 20 may often be seen at any one time. Song "battles" heard and aggressive behaviour seen in February and March. Two larks will chase each other around a small area (average 30 yards diameter) and then stop to face one another at a distance of 3 feet. One or both will sing vigorously and one bird soon crouches whilst the other stands erect, and suddenly the "croucher" chases the other away.

European Sand Martin Riparia riparia:

From October to March at (a)(b)(c) in groups of 10-20. If the colour of the throat is a reliable character, ie. white in the European migrant and dusky brown in the African resident, then all our sightings refer to riparia. However, Broadbent (pers. comm.) saw paludicola in Sokoto in April, and Dobbs (1959) also saw paludicola from October to April.

Banded Martin Riparia cincta:

A pair at (i) in September.

European swallow Hirundo rustica:

24 sightings at (b)(c) in September, October, March and April. Small groups.

Ethiopian swallow Hirundo aethiopica:

By far the commonest hirundine, resident at (a)(b)(c)(d)(h)(i) and spreading to (e)(f) in the wet season. Generally in groups of 20 or so, but on 4 occasions numbering more than 100: at (a) in November at (c) in February and April, and once at (e) in March, a group of 500 were perched on the telephone wires. Courtship, ie. pairs tumbling through the air, seen at (i) in July and juveniles (with a pale rufous forehead but prominent breast patches) there in September; 2 juveniles were perched on a millet stalk, and fluttered their wings and called loudly whenever their parents flew up to them with food. On the approach of a Crow, they flew away. These swallows often drink from the swimming pool.

Lesser Striped Swallow Hirundo abyssinica:

A pair at (h) in June.

European House Martin Delichon urbica:

A single bird at (g) in June.

Blue-Headed Wagtail Motacilla flava:

From 29th September to 12th April at (a)(b)(c)(d)(e)(f) and 5 birds at (i) in December; the season's first Wagtails were seen on 29th September 1970 and 30th September 1971. They show a clear association with wet open areas; generally well dispersed in small groups, though 1000 seen at (a) in February. We have not seen any roosts or flight-lines. Only seldom seen around cattle and usually the birds are in and around scattered trees. Notwithstanding Bannerman's remarks (1953, pp. 826-7), we think we have recognised 4 races (identifications in March): flava, cinereicapilla, thunbergi and flavissima in that order (but see Elgood et al., 1966).

White Wagtail Motacilla alba:

Much less common than the Yellow and sighted 90 times from 17th November to 26th March at (a)(f). Closely attached to pools of water throughout this period. They often jump into the air.

Tawny Pipit Anthus campestris:

Group of 5 birds at (i) in January.

Tree Pipit Anthus trivialis:

Seen at (c) in November, February and March, and at (h) in October. 9 sightings. One bird was seen walking on its tarsi and not its toes!

Brubru Shrike: Nilaus afer:

A conspicuous bird aurally as its "pea-whistle" (Bannerman 1953) is unmistakable. Its occurrence is erratic - seen and heard every day for 2 weeks near (e) in March; a pair at (e) in May; a pair near (e) in August; and 1 heard near (e) in December. Probably the same pair and clearly attracted to the woodland at (e) and surrounding woodlands in Government Residential Areas. Presumably resident there.

Gambian Puff-Back Shrike Dryocopus gambensis:

From March to December at (e) and February and August at (g). Probably resident in both woodlands. Always high in trees and often in pairs. Heard singing in June. The woodland at (e) holds 1 or 2 pairs.

Black-crowned Tchagra Tchagra senegalensis:

Resident in the farmland surrounding (g), and at (h); seen occasionally at (a)(c)(f). Its call is distinctive and without it the bird would often pass unnoticed. Breeding at (h) in July (Pt. 3). Not a common bird even in its 2 favoured habitats.

Barbary Shrike Laniarius barbarus:

Resident at (e)(f)(g)(h) and seen once at (c); (e) holds 4 or 5 pairs. Generally seen in pairs and their unique duetted call may be heard throughout the year (rec). It is not so secretive or skulking as Bannerman (1953) describes. It was once seen tearing a weaver's nest to pieces; on another occasion it attacked and killed a Cordon Bleu Estrilda bengala and impaled it upon a thorn (our thanks to Mrs. Poole for the latter observation). One pair in February were seen chasing each other "leap-frog" fashion, both frequently hopping up and down.

Grey-headed Bush Shrike Malaconotus blanchoti:

Resident at (e)(f)(g), at least 1 pair in each. Generally skulking and seen singly or in pairs. It is at the very north of its range here. Like all our resident shrikes, it has an unmistakable call, a "melancholy bell-like note" (Bannerman 1953), and rather haunting, which often advertises the hidden bird (rec). We have heard it calling in January (perhaps duetting, rec.), June and September. Probable courtship seen in late January - one bird of a pair chasing the other and frequently raising its head. Either bird, or perhaps both, utter a call quite different to the normal, being a rattle followed by a very short whistle, with one or several whistles sounded for each rattle. Such whistles are a sharper form of the plaintive call. On 2 occasions in January, courting birds were on the edge of a small Neem plantation near (f), and they were most conspicuous.

Long-tailed Shrike Corvinella corvina:

Resident at (e)(f)(g), noisy and gregarious. At least 10 birds live in each habitat, with a group of 20 at (g) in October (and including juveniles?). They are usually seen feeding on the ground and when disturbed fly into the lower branches of a tree.

Woodchat Lanius senator:

From 17th September to 12th April at (a)(b)(c)(d)(h) and on the farmland surrounding (e)(f); seen twice at (i), and a juvenile (pale colour) seen at (i) on 28th August. An adult seen on 15th June. This shrike perches motionless on a branch for long periods, and then dashes out to catch an insect in the manner of a flycatcher. 80 sightings of the nominate race only.

European Golden Oriole Oriolus Oriolus:

Single males seen on 27th September and 1st October in separate years. This appears to be the third report of the Oriole in Nigeria (Elgood et al.).

African Golden Oriole Oriolus auratus:

From July to February at (e) and a similar occurrence to that noted by Dobbs (1959). Either single males, or males with 1 or 2 females. Always perched in tree-tops. An auratus male chased an oriolus male in October.

Glossy-backed Drongo Dicrurus adsinilis:

Single birds at (g) in June, September, October and at (f) in January

Swainson's Glossy Starling Lamprotornis chloropterus:

Seen at (e) in January (3 birds), July (50 birds, about $\frac{1}{3}$ being juveniles with spotted brown plumage), August (40 birds, same proportion of juveniles) and November (12 adults). Only seen when they come to roost in the evenings.

Blue-eared Glossy Starling Lamprotornis chalybaeus:

The commonest starling and resident at (a)(b)(e)(f)(g); in the wet season at (h); in the dry season at (d); and on odd occasions at (c)(i). A song "battle" heard in June (rec.), breeding in August (Pt. 3), and juveniles seen in July (half of a flock of 30, being blackish-brown in colour). Generally in groups of 20-30, but flocks of 100 seen in February, October and December. Our sightings in the study areas show a diminution in numbers during the wet season, suggesting a movement northwards: -80, 247, 120, -, -, (observers absent), 45, 72, 51, 19, 150, 98, 140. On one occasion a group of 6 were seen robbing a Black Cobra, Naja. We have not seen any chalcurus which Serle found nesting here.

Long-tailed Glossy Starling Lamprotornis caudatus:

Its habits are similar to the Long-tailed Shrike's, for the Starling is noisy, gregarious and usually found feeding on the ground. It is associated with woodland and is resident at (e)(f)(g) but also at the more open (h). The birds seen just as noisy in the late evening as during the day. Generally in groups of 10-20, but 40 seen at (e) in June (including juveniles?). As with the Blue-eared Starling, our sightings show a decrease during a part of the wet season -60, 45, 39, -, -, (observers absent), 72, 65, 41, 9, 22, 55, 51. The woodland at (e) holds about 15 birds which disappear from September to November inclusive.

Amethyst Starling Cinnyricinclus leucogaster:

A male and female pair at (h) in July.

Chestnut-bellied Starling Spreo pulcher:

Widespread but in small groups of 10-15; less common than the Blue-eared Starling. Resident at (c)(g)(h) and occurring occasionally at (a)(d). A juvenile seen in August (yellow bill, brown throat and chest).

Yellow-billed Oxpecker Buphagus africanus:

Found, of course, wherever there are domestic animals, and in our area that means nearly everywhere. Breeding at (i) in July (Pt. 3). This bird has 2 quite clear-cut dispersion patterns: feeding in very small groups up to 6 and quite often singly; roosting in groups of 10 or more but usually of 50-200. A suggested function of communal roosting is that most birds can quickly direct their attention to a food supply the next day (Lack, 1968). In a "wild" situation, this would be useful to the Oxpecker looking for mobile ungulates. But in Sokoto there is never any difficulty in finding domestic animals and so the birds disperse over the area completely. Only once have we seen any animal trying to rid itself of an Oxpecker: a donkey persistently rolling.

Piapiac Ptilostomus afer:

Of uncertain status, but probably resident at (b)(g), those areas having many palms with the birds often to be seen in and around them; also occasionally at (a)(c)(e)(f). Its numbers do drop in some months; our sightings are: -26, 6, 0, freq. (Broadbent), - (observers absent), 42, 5, 25, 7, 65, 65, 15. Where resident it is in flocks of about 20, but once at (g) in November it numbered more than 50 in a mixed flock with starlings, Long-tailed Shrikes and Grey Hornbills. Red billed birds have been seen in June, October and December. Breeding in June; one parent near a nest scolded a Harrier Hawk until the latter moved away (rec.). Also seen scolding a Red-necked Kestrel.

Pied Crow Corvus albus:

Seen everywhere, but more particularly as noted by Bannerman (1953) near human habitation. It is resident in all our areas; but seen in ones or twos only, at (h)(i). Breeding begins in late April or early May (Pt. 3). There is as yet no good evidence to support the notion that birds pair for life (but see Lamm, 1958). Nor is it now true that the Crow is heavily parasitised by the Grey-spotted Cuckoo around Sokoto (see Mundy and Cook, 1971a).

True to its genus the Pied Crow is of unfailing interest and no doubt appeals to humans because of its intelligence (and Aggression?) Both of us have hand-reared nestlings and the fledglings then remain near the house until the next breeding season. The number of living things that Crows will attack is legion - humans, donkeys, goats, all raptors and especially eagles, ~~and~~ small hawks (and also once a Lanner) and owls; in or out of the breeding season. Whilst studying Crows we often found that one adult of a nesting pair

would see our car in the distance and come to meet us, scolding all the way even over a distance of 200-300 yards. When we examined the nests, the parents would swoop over us and call in an odd manner that within minutes produced a large flock of equally angry Crows.

Crows sometimes wash their food before eating it. Once we heard a Crow mimic an Egret. Neither of our hand-reared birds came near to talking.

Common Garden Bulbul Pycnonotus barbatus:

Resident at (e) (f) (g) and seen on occasions at (c) and in the wet season at (h). Copulation seen in January and February. At least 5 pairs occur at (e) (rec.).

Whinchat Saxicola rubetra

3 sightings of single birds at (d) in October and December.

Wheatear Oenanthe oenanthe:

From 10th October to 21st March in all our areas. 120 sightings and a common bird in groups of 1-3. Some males have their breeding plumage in early March.

Spanish Wheatear Oenanthe hispanica:

5 sightings in February and March at (f) (g) (h), 4 white- and 1 black-throated birds. Once we saw oenanthe chasing hispanica in February. In contrast to the former, hispanica perches in trees.

Desert Wheatear Oenanthe deserti:

A single male at (f) in January.

Red-tailed Chat Cercomela familiaris:

Single birds seen at (h) in February and March.

Ant Chat Myrmecocichla aethiops:

Resident groups at (h) (i) numbering at least 20 and 10 birds respectively; also seen at (a) (b) (f); and odd birds are always found at the many laterite quarries around Sokoto. Generally in loose groups within 800 yards of their resting/roosting tunnels and rarely ranging further away. As Bannerman (1953) notes, their voice is delightful, and they call throughout the year (rec.). Courting begins in May, but egg-laying does not begin until the rains have properly arrived (Pt. 3).

These birds find their insect food on the ground but are also adept at catching flying termites. They like to perch on corn stalks, bushes and trees. We have seen them react as a group to a flying Black Kite and Shikra, by raising an alarm call and either darting into a bush or displaying on the ground. Yet they did not mob a Black Cuckoo Naje (which also uses their tunnels and is no

doubt a nest predator) which was being mobbed by the Blue-eared Starling. Once we saw a Chat chasing a Woodpecker several times around a tree.

Rock Thrush Monticola saxatilis:

2 sightings: a female at (i) on 19th November and a male in bright plumage on 19th March on old farmland at the town's edge.

Blue Rock Thrush Monticola solitaria:

4 birds seen at (i): a female or immature on 19th November, a male on 10th January, and 2 females on 13th February; all among rocks. We are confident of our identifications here because of direct comparison with the resident Ant Chats. Elgood et al. (1966) have only one previous record. Dobbs (1959) saw it in April, but was not credited by Elgood.

European Redstart Phoenicurus phoenicurus:

Not so common as the Wheatear, about 60 sightings. From 27th September to 25th March it is resident at (e), often in pairs. In October and March we have the biggest counts. Also seen occasionally at (b)(c)(f)(g)(h). It perches on the lowest branches of trees and then makes a sudden dash to the ground. Often to be seen chasing each other.

Black Scrub Robin Cercotrichas podobe:

Only seen at (h) in February, August, October and November, either singly or in pairs. Always seen at the same place within (h). Probably resident.

Rufous Warbler Cercotrichas galactotes:

Rather few sightings (30) for this conspicuous bird, but at least 2 pairs are resident at (h) and it may be resident at (i). Though we visited its habitats throughout the year we did not see it in August and September, a feature too of Dobbs' (1959) observations; perhaps it moves northwards with the rains. Courtship seen in June (ie. tail-raising, wing dropping and chasing).

Snowy-crowned Robin Chat Cossypha niveicapilla:

A secretive bird, sighted 8 times: at (f)(g) in February to August where it is perhaps resident (cf. Fry 1970). We have never seen it at (e) where it was once sighted by Dobbs (1959), and this is probably due to drainage development and undergrowth clearance. At (f)(g) it prefers the thick, moist patches.

Sudan Brown Babbler Turdoides plebejus:

A noisy bird (rec) and gregarious but very quick to fade away in to the woodland gloom when it notices an observer. Resident at (f)

(g), 10-15 birds each, and a group of 6 at (e) in December. The whole head is grey and its tail is held downwards - Bannerman's colour picture (1953 opp. p. 840) is misleading in these aspects. The birds take large hops when on the ground.

European Reed Warbler Acrocephalus scirpaceus:

A single bird at (f) on 15th March.

Icterine/Melodious Warbler Hippolais icterina/polyglotta:

Single birds at (e) on 25th October and 28th November. According to Elgood et al. (1966), the Melodious is more likely to be seen.

Olivaceous Warbler Hippolais pallida:

10 sightings: 1 bird at (g) on 16th October; group of 6 at Amanawa on 29th October, and group of 3 at (e) on 30th November.

European Whitethroat Sylvia communis:

From 22nd November to 18th March at (c)(d)(e)(f)(g)(h)(i). Usually singly, but several seen in the same area together in March. No Sylvia curruca seen.

Subalpine Warbler Sylvia cartillans:

15 sightings from 25th September to 21st March at (c)(e).

Willow Warbler/Chiffchaff Phylloscopus trochilus/collybita:

50 sightings at (e) from 19th October to 8th February. 20 birds were seen on this last day.

Wood Warbler Phylloscopus sibilatrix:

15 birds at (e) on 25th October, then sparingly to 5th December. One bird at (e) on 30th August.

Rufous Grass Warbler Cisticola galactotes:

Seen occasionally through the year at (b)(c)(d). One bird was seen carrying nest material in October.

Red Pate Grass Warbler Cisticola ruficeps:

Conspicuous by stance, atop a tree, and song (rec) in the wet season and seen at (h) from July to October; 2 or 3 singing birds.

Gold Coast Fantail Warbler Cisticola juncidis:

Resident at (a)(b)(c)(d). "Zitting", the East African name, is apt

West African Prinia Prinia subflava:

11 sightings: at (g)(h) in June to August and (d) in December.

Grey-backed Camaroptera Camaroptera brachyura:

Resident at (c)(g)(h) but never more than 1 or 2 pairs seen at

each. Courtship begins in July -both male and female produce a fast clicking sound from their vibrating wings and both continuously tweeter. The female sits on a branch whilst the male hops to and fro from one branch to another, 6 ins. to 1 ft. apart, his tail spread into a fan. The female flies off, the male follows, and the actions are repeated. Also in July, fighting seen -2 birds grappling together tumbled out of a tree to the ground.

Grey-backed Eremomela Eremomela icteropygialis:

22 sightings: probably resident at (e)(g)(h). Generally singly or in pairs.

Green-backed Eremomela Eremomela pusilla:

Twice seen in groups of 8 at (d)(e) in March and April. They are altogether brighter in the field than icteropygialis as well as seeming more social.

Senegal Crombec Sylvietta brachyura:

10 sightings: probably resident at (e)(g)(h), singly or in pairs.

Spotted Flycatcher Muscicapa striata:

Single birds at (e) on 27th October and 5th December.

Senegal Puffback Flycatcher Batis senegalensis:

Single males at (h) in June and October.

Paradise Flycatcher Tersiphone viridis:

12 sightings at (e)(f)(g) from June to October and once in January. It is probably resident in all 3 areas, but is noticed more in the wet season because it is breeding and very noisy. Both brown and white phases have been seen: white males (4 times, one with a little brown in the tail) and brown females (6 times) - cf. Bannerman (1936) who notes all females as brown, and the white males as common in Northern Nigeria. In June a male was seen flitting between 2 trees for $\frac{1}{2}$ hour and calling persistently in 2 notes. Also in June a female noded a Pearl Spotted Owlet until it left its perch. Again, in June a pair were seen displaying together with much calling (rec), flapping of wings and flying to and fro.

Pygmy Long-tailed Sunbird Anthreptes platura:

Recognised on account of the males' long tails from October to March and always carefully distinguished from Nectarinia pulchella. Only 5 positive sightings in that period. Dobbs (1959) records it in eclipse plumage from April to August, though by implication.

Scarlet-breasted Sunbird Nectarinia senegalensis:

10 sightings of males throughout the year at (b)(c)(f) and apparently associated with fadama and stream vegetation. A pair in June.

Beautiful Long-tailed Sunbird Nectarinia pulchella:

The commonest sunbird, found in abundance at (e)(f)(g) and whenever there are blossoming trees; in the wet season at (h)(i); and on odd occasions at (b)(c)(d). The woodland of (e) holds at least 10 pairs. The species seems gregarious only inasmuch as several may gather in a tree with many blossoms; otherwise they are met singly. The males in eclipse plumage retain green metallic wing coverts and are then found either with or without their long tails; perhaps the short-tailed birds are first-year immatures? Assumption of breeding plumage begins in March and is complete by May, and is lost during October. Aggression and courtship also begin in March; males chasing and scolding other males, and courting females with outspread wings and tail. Twice we have seen males courting 2 females together. Juveniles (with a vertical black streak on the throat and upper chest) are seen from July to October.

Yellow-bellied Bunting Emberiza flaviventris:

Resident at (h) and seen singly and in pairs. Juveniles (with a yellow crown between the 2 top stripes) in August. No Emberiza forbesi seen.

Rock Bunting Emberiza tahapisi:

Resident at (h)(i) in numbers around 50 each; occasionally at all our other areas and a group of 50 at (c) in June on freshly dug ground. Generally conspicuous because of their tweetering song throughout the year; males are more brightly coloured than females. Juveniles (with red bills) seen in August.

Yellow-fronted Canary Serinus mozambicus:

Seen only a few times at (h) from February to August.

Grey Canary Serinus leucopygius:

Group of 4 at (h) in October.

Slender-billed Weaver Ploceus luteolus:

Males begin assuming breeding plumage in March and from then to October this Weaver is resident at (b)(e)(g)(h)(i) and seen occasionally at (c)(f). Usually in pairs and always in trees. Widespread. Breeding from June (Pt. 3).

Vitelline Masked Weaver Ploceus velatus:

From June to October it is widespread, occurring at (b)(c)(d)(e)

(g)(h). It breeds in a variety of places—over water, in arid parts of the bush, and around human habitation (cf. Morel and Morel 1962) —from July to October. Generally it seems to be a solitary nester, one male building and destroying a group of nests and attracting between 1 and 4 females. As Bannerman emphasises (1953, pp. 1379-80) males of velatus and heuglini are difficult to distinguish, and after many hours watching both species in the field differentiation can be seen on 6 points:—nest shape, eye colour, black of throat, wing colour, chest colour, forehead colour; in that order of usefulness (Pt. 3).

Heuglin's Masked Weaver Plocens heuglini:

Seen from June to October and positively identified at only 5 places: in a Nigerian family's compound (every year); close to the Catering Rest House dining room; at the gates of the new Capital School; in widely spaced trees at (i); in an acacia overlooking the Sokoto river. Hence, three of these sights are "protected", and indeed the few nests at the School gates were clustered around a wasps' nest (see Elgood and Ward 1960, and note that our second group above is at the same site as their no. 4). Known to breed at 2 places (pt. 3), the first and last detailed above, both colonies with more than 20 nests; up to 10 nests at the C.R.H., School gates and (i); immatures' nests at (i) also. Apparent polygamy in our first site. Thus at Sokoto, the breeding ranges of heuglini and velatus overlap (cf. Hall and Moreau 1970).

Village Weaver Plocens cucullatus:

Males are in breeding plumage from May to early November. This is the only weaver we can recognise outside the breeding season, due to its large size and bill, and red eye. It is resident in all our areas in variously sized groups, but only occasionally seen at (h)(i). This bird breeds in 2 main situations, over water and close to human habitation, even inside courtyards. Breeding seems to be initiated by sufficient rainfall (Pt. 3), though probably by rain's effect on the vegetation and invertebrata (but cf. Collias and Collias 1970). Colonies are not large, averaging about 20 males; one colony was in the same trees near the bridge over the river Rima as noted by Dobbs (1959). There is no dependence on Baobab trees (cf. Bannerman 1953, p. 1383).

Black-headed Weaver Plocens melanocephalus:

Breeding males from early August to early October at (a)(c). A colony of 2 males, 5 females and 9 nests at (c) in September to October. (Pt. 3). Only seen by running water. Very much less common than in the 1950's (see Dobbs 1959).

Black-faced Dioch Quelea quelea:

Seen almost throughout the year in all our areas except (i) though preferring the fadanas and the farmland around (f)(g). Our monthly sightings indicate an exodus in July (cf. Ward 1965), but also in September and October: -100, 155, 360, -, -, (observers absent), 80, 3, 98, 0, 17, 72, 50. Generally in flocks of 20-30 with sex ratio equal; their species is known to be monogamous (Ward, op.cit.). No evidence of breeding.

Yellow-crowned Bishop Euplectes afer:

The males are in breeding plumage from mid-July to early November and require water for nesting over, this fact probably determining the comparative lateness of their onset of breeding. During these months they are seen at (a)(b)(c), and surprisingly one male was seen at (h) in August. In the non-breeding season they are present in the rice fields of (a) in their thousands. In courtship, seen in August the male chases the female fluffing himself up considerably. Other-wise he travels around his territory like a whirring bullet.

Orange Bishop Euplectes orix:

Of much wider habitat tolerance than afer and not at all tied to water, hence the orix male assumes breeding plumage with the onset of the wet season rainfall and not with the amount of ground water. This comes to a full month before afer and lasts to early November. The Orange Bishop is then found in all our areas except (f), generally on farmland amongst corn and millet. 1-20 males may be seen in one place together at a time.

White-billed Buffalo Weaver Bubalornis albirostris:

Resident at Amanawa where it nests. It happens not to nest in any of our areas and is only occasionally seen at (a)(f)(g)(h), with a flock of 24 being seen at (g) in November. It seems then to be closely associated with its breeding sites throughout the year. On 5 occasions, in January, February, July and August, we have seen one or more Weavers among a group of starlings, always Spree pulcher and sometimes also Lamprotornis chalybaeus. On one occasion only have we seen the Weaver at a time when there were no starlings around. The relationship close to their colonies may well be different.

Breeding at the Amanawa colony of 30-50 birds begins in late June; this colony overlooks a Nigerian family's compound and is used every year. Nest-building or -repairing continues until late October and may well persist throughout the year. Juveniles begin to appear in August. At a distance of 200 yds, from another colony 2 adults were seen feeding 2 juveniles which were sitting in a bush. These fledglings were brown with white spotting on the back, and white edging to the primaries, the bill was dark with pink edges and the inside-mouth was red. Soon they jumped to the ground and began

foraging for themselves.

Sparrow Weaver Plocepasser superciliosus:

3 sightings at(h) in July and August; building a grass-ball nest

Grey-headed Sparrow Passer griseus:

Resident everywhere and inside the town. Seen singly or in groups of up to 50. Nesting in August to October in tree-holes and under roofs. Once seen catching flying termites.

Scaly-fronted Weaver Sporopipes frontalis:

Resident at(h). Of uncertain status, but 20 seen in scattered groups in January. Otherwise usually seen in very few numbers. Nest-building in July and August (later abandoned).

Pin-tailed Whydah Vidua macroura:

Rarely seen for such a conspicuous bird, perhaps because its Waxbill host (q.v.) is not common around Sokoto. From early June to early October males or pairs are encountered at(b)(c)(d)(f)(g)(h)(i). On 2 occasions groups were seen at(b): on 13th June, 2 flocks each numbering about 30 birds, with the pied males outnumbered by females by 4:1, and a couple of males courting by flying above a female and fluttering down; on 15th October a flock of 10 males some half of which were lacking the long tail feathers, suggesting the pattern of moult.

Indigo Finch Vidua chalybeata:

A common bird, now known to parasitise the Senegal Firefinch (Morel and Morel, 1955). Like its host it is found in every habitat except perhaps in the town itself (unlike its host). Males seen coming into breeding plumage in June and July, but odd males occur throughout the year, and its host after all breeds for 9 months of the year (Morel 1964). Our sightings of males are: -4, 5, 10, -, -, (observers absent), 60, 4, 20, 10, 15, 5, 2. On 2 occasions, both in June large groups of 20 and 40 birds were seen, the great majority being males.

Broad-tailed Paradise Whydah Vidua orientalis:

Males in breeding plumage are seen from July to early December and only at(g)(h), singly or rarely paired with one female. Its Pytilia host (Hall and Moreau, 1970) is only seen at(h). As Bannerman (1953) notes, the males have a habit of flying from the top of one bush or tree to the top of another, usually 100yds. or more apart. At Maru, lat. 12° 15' N, males have been seen in breeding plumage in February; as with the Vidua macroura, one male orientalis lacked the long tail feathers.

Cut-Throat Weaver Amadina fasciata:

From September to January at(h) in groups of 5-50; and at(c) in June, 3 males among a mixed flock of other weavers. One flock of 30 in October comprised 24 males and 6 females. No evidence of breeding. Like the Silverbill, this Weaver is known to lay in old weavers' nests.

Melba Finch Pytilia melba:

Seen at(h) in 5 months of the year and perhaps resident there; also in a nearby Forest Reserve. Often in pairs. Nest building in July. Generally seen skulking about on or near to the ground.

Black-rumped Waxbill Estrilda troglodytes:

Seen throughout the year, but seems to move around as it is not resident in any one locality continuously. Seen at one time or another in all our areas except(c)(e), sometimes singly, usually in groups averaging 10 birds. On 4 occasions, groups of 20 or more seen (January and February). The Waxbill is seen in the breeding season (ie. the rains) only at(g)(h)(i), and its parasite Vidua macroura (Hall and Moreau, 1970) is seen there too.

Red-cheeked Cordon Bleu Estrilda bengala:

Resident in large numbers inside and around Sokoto. Found in all our areas except(a) in groups up to 20, and nesting in September and October (Pt.3). Very often feeding in a mixed group with the Senegal Firefinch. The sex ratio of bengala flocks seems to vary a great deal.

Senegal Firefinch Lagonosticta senegala:

Like the Cordon Bleu this bird may be found anywhere. Generally seen in smaller parties than Estrildabongala and often in pairs. Nesting in September and October (Pt.3). Very often feeding with the Cordon Bleu.

Quail Finch Ortygospiza atricollis:

One bird among tussocks at(a) in February.

Warbling Silverbill Lonchura malabarica:

A widespread bird and resident in all our areas; usually in groups of 5-20, but once a group of 50 at Amanawa in July. Copulation seen in June and breeding known from September to January (Pt.3). These birds often lay in old weavers' nests (van Someren and van Someren 1945, but cf. Morel and Morel 1962, p.172), and in a study of their nesting habits we found that the Silverbill built for itself only 2 nests out of 39 used (Mundy and Cook in prep.). Two birds seen allopreening in August.

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to be continued ...

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BIRD NOTES FROM THE PLAINS SOUTH OF LAKE CHAD

WINTER 1971-1972 PART 2

by

D.A. HOLMES

Clapperton's Francolin Francolinus clappertoni:

Moderately common in thorn scrub. Well-grown chick seen on 28th March.

Common Quail Coturnix coturnix:

Few records of solitary birds, all before early December.

Grey-breasted Helmet Guinea-Fowl Numida meleagris:

After seeing the abundance of this species in the Waza game reserve in N. Cameroun, we must assume all guinea-fowl have long since been eaten in our area. The only evidence found of wild guinea-fowl was of one feather picked up in a well-wooded area of the northern sand ridge.

African Moorhen Gallinula chloropus:

Several records along the river in December, when the water was high.

Demoiselle Crane Anthropoides virgo:

Common visitor to the clay plains, first seen on 21st January, thence regularly until the last few left on 4th March. They were seen most regularly in the area between Marte and Logomani, feeding