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Further additions to and deletions from the avifauna of Congo-Brazzaville

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Summary

This paper documents 73 recent additions to the avifauna of Congo-Brazzaville, 67 of them from the Odzala and Nouabalé-Ndoki National Parks in the north. Of 20 new Palaearctic records, a Northern Pochard *Aythya ferina* near Owando was a long way south of its normal winter quarters. Many of the new Afrotropical species are forest elements already known from neighbouring NE Gabon, with the exception of Forest Wood-Hoopoe *Phoeniculus castaneiceps* and Barred Owllet *Glaucidium capense*, discovered in open-canopy semi-evergreen forest, and Grant's Bluebill *Spermophaga poliogenys*. In the case of the essentially montane Grey-headed Broadbill *Smithornis sharpei*, Uganda Woodland Warbler *Phylloscopus budongoensis* and Black-throated Apalis *Apalis jacksoni*, we consider the Odzala populations to be relicts from a colder climate. Of savanna species, the discovery of large populations of Black-backed Cloud Cisticola *Cisticola eximius* in the dambos of Odzala and Owando was unexpected, as the species was unknown south of the Guineo-Congolian forest block.

Résumé

Cet article documente 73 additions récentes à l'avifaune du Congo, dont 67 proviennent des Parcs nationaux d'Odzala et de Nouabalé-Ndoki dans le nord. Parmi 20 nouvelles données d'espèces paléarctiques, l'observation d'un Fuligule milouin *Aythya ferina* près d'Owando est située loin au sud des quartiers d'hiver. Parmi les espèces afrotropicales, beaucoup sont des éléments forestiers déjà connus du NE du Gabon, avec toutefois trois exceptions: l'Irisor à tête brune *Phoeniculus castaneiceps* et la Chevêchette du Cap *Glaucidium capense*, découverts en forêt ouverte semi-décidue, et le Grosbec à front rouge *Spermophaga poliogenys*. Dans le cas de l'Eurylaime à tête grise *Smithornis sharpei*, du Pouillot d'Ouganda *Phylloscopus budongoensis* et de l'Apalis à moustaches blanches *Apalis jacksoni*, trois

espèces essentiellement montagnardes ailleurs en Afrique, les populations d'Odzala sont probablement des reliques d'un climat plus froid. Parmi les espèces savaniques, la découverte d'importantes populations de la Cisticole à dos noir *Cisticola eximius* dans les dembos d'Odzala et d'Owando était inattendue, puisque l'espèce n'était pas connue au sud du bloc forestier guinéo-congolais.

Introduction

From December 1993 to April 1995, we were resident in Odzala N.P. in northern Congo, except for the period 8 May to 18 July 1994. Odzala is part of a large section of northern Congo that had remained virtually unexplored; only Descarpentries & Villiers (1964) had collected birds in the park, presenting a short list of 43 species seen or obtained. After publication of a preliminary checklist for Congo (Dowsett & Dowsett-Lemaire 1989), we presented a first series of additions after carrying out more field work in the south (Dowsett-Lemaire *et al.* 1993). Our sojourn in Odzala produced many more new records detailed below. Two subsequent and shorter visits to Nouabalé-Ndoki N.P. in the extreme north of the country — three weeks in April 1996 by FDL, 24 days in April–May 1997 by both of us — also produced several interesting new data. Only a few recent additions come from the south, mainly between Brazzaville and Owando, including the gallery forests and savannas of the Téké Plateau, visited near Mah (3°20'S, 15°30'E) by FDL from 22 to 29 Apr 1996.

Odzala N.P. (0°30'–1°00'N, 14°40'–15°05'E) is at the NW limit of the Congo basin. It lies on a plateau at 500–650 m a.s.l., slightly dissected by two main river valleys (the Mambili and its affluent the Lékoli) which are at altitudes of 350–450 m. Habitats are varied and include c. 420 km² of wooded grassland (the main small tree being *Hymenocardia acida*) in the southern half of the park, interspersed with fairly extensive forests, while the northern half consists of continuous forest. Savannas are locally dotted about with thickets; they are at the northern limit of the open savanna country of central Congo. Forests are of two types: swamp forest in galleries and depressions, only slightly flooded, and dry-land forests. The latter usually have a fairly open canopy with dense, impenetrable understorey dominated by Marantaceae. Other habitats, of much smaller extent, include seasonally or permanently flooded dambos (moist grassy meadows on acid soils), a few marshes and salt-pans. A total of 435 species was recorded in the forest-savanna mosaics of the southern half of the park (Dowsett-Lemaire 1997a).

Nouabalé-Ndoki N.P. (2°12'–3°N, 16°30'–16°55'E) consists entirely of forest, mainly at an altitude of 340–400 m; as in Odzala N.P., dry-land forests are mainly semi-evergreen, with an open canopy. We explored the SW corner of the Park (Ndoki and Mbéli Rivers) as well as the buffer zone around Bomassa on the Sangha River (Dowsett-Lemaire 1997b).

Nomenclature follows Dowsett & Forbes-Watson (1993), except for the *Cisticola brunnescens/cinnamomeus* superspecies (cf. Tye in Urban *et al.* 1997). For observations by only one of us, we give the observer's initials. Abundance ratings follow recent guidelines published in *Malimbus* (17: 36), but these criteria are applicable only to observations in Odzala N.P., as visits elsewhere were too brief.

Additions to the Congo list

Threskiornithidae

Bostrychia olivacea Green Ibis. Nouabalé-Ndoki N.P.: a pair roosted on a forested island or on the mainland near Bomassa Camp, in Apr 1996 and Apr–May 1997, calling irregularly just before or at dusk, and more regularly at dawn; a pair also seen flying over Ndoki Camp. Tape-recorded.

Anatidae

Aythya ferina Northern Pochard. A male in breeding plumage was resting in a small lake in the middle of dambos just south of Owando (0°30'S, 16°E), 24 Dec 1993.

Accipitridae

Melierax metabates Dark Chanting Goshawk. A few pairs resident in savanna in Odzala N.P.; also seen near Mah (FDL).

Aquila wahlbergi Wahlberg's Eagle. One immature was seen at close range in savanna in Odzala N.P., 17 Aug 1994 (FDL). An adult female fitted with a radio transmitter in N Namibia in 1994 flew over Congo-Brazzaville on both journeys to and from her winter quarters, being located by satellite close to Odzala N.P. (c. 0–1°S, 15–16°E) on 14 Apr 1994, and on the Cameroon-Congo border (c. 2°N, 16°E) on 24 Aug 1994 (Meyburg *et al.* 1995).

A. pomarina Lesser Spotted Eagle. Three flying south, 29 Oct to 9 Nov; six flying north, 17–30 Apr 1994 and one, 4 Apr 1995, all in Odzala N.P. Singles flying north near Bomassa, 16 and 17 Apr 1996 (FDL), and 2 May 1997, a rather late date.

A. rapax Tawny Eagle. The occurrence of this species in Congo (cf. Salvan 1972) was doubted by Dowsett & Dowsett-Lemaire (1989), but it was seen frequently near Mah by FDL, and a nest was occupied in the same area in 1995 (L. Mastromatteo, pers. comm.).

A. nipalensis Steppe Eagle. Three birds resting on a salt-pan, Odzala N.P., 17 Dec 1993 (RJD).

Hieraetus pennatus Booted Eagle. Odzala N.P.: total of ten flying north, 5–30 Apr 1994; one perched in savanna, 22 Jan and 27 Mar 1995. All but the Jan bird were dark phase.

H. ayresii Ayres's Hawk Eagle. An immature landed on a sand beach on the Sangha River, at Djembé, 25 Apr 1997 (RJD). It closely resembled a juvenile watched a few days earlier with two adults in Cameroon, i.e. it was distinguishable by its being a heavily-built hawk eagle with immaculate, pale cinnamon, underparts.

Falconidae

Falco tinnunculus Common Kestrel. One seen near the Léfini River (c. 3°S, 15°30'E), 11 Mar 1994 (RJD). Common near Mah (FDL): birds seen at close range, perched on rocks, were very richly coloured (probably belonging to the African race *rupicolus*) and are known to be resident (L. Mastromatteo, pers. comm.).

F. subbuteo European Hobby. Odzala N.P.: one, 25 Mar (RJD); another, 7 Apr 1995. Both seen at close range, perched on small trees or flying low over savanna, and showed heavy dark streaking on the pale breast, with rufous confined to lower belly, vent and thighs.

Phasianidae

Coturnix chinensis Blue Quail. One flushed in grassland, Odzala N.P., 19 Feb 1995 (RJD).

Rallidae

Porphyrio porphyrio Purple Gallinule. One in full view on the edge of a marsh in Odzala N.P., 15 Mar 1994, was evidently a vagrant (FDL).

Glareolidae

Glareola pratincola Common Pratincole. One, clearly this species, flying over a marsh in Odzala N.P., 23 Dec 1994 (FDL); a *Glareola* sp. (probably the same bird) seen three days later over savanna (RJD).

G. nordmanni Black-winged Pratincole. One seen at very close range at a salt pan (Odzala N.P.), 23 Sep 1994 (RJD). Flocks of *Glareola* had been seen previously in Congo (Verschuren 1978); from the dates they were probably *G. nordmanni*.

Charadriidae

Charadrius dubius Little Ringed Plover. One seen well, then flushed from a salt-pan in Odzala N.P., 4 Dec 1994.

C. asiaticus Caspian Plover. Four groups of 2–5 individuals in savanna near Pointe-Noire, Dec 1995 (A. Brosset, *in litt.*).

Gallinago gallinago Common Snipe. Several observations of 1–2 birds in dambos and marshes in winter in Odzala N.P., extreme dates 22 Dec and 9 Feb.

Tringa ochropus Green Sandpiper. Regular in small numbers Oct–Mar in Odzala N.P.; and also reported from the Sangha R. near Bomassa (several observers).

Columbidae

Streptopelia turtur European Turtle Dove. Singles in savanna, Odzala N.P., 28 Nov 1994 (FDL) and 1 Mar 1995 (RJD).

Strigidae

Otus icterorhynchus Sandy Scops Owl. One was captured by a local worker 10 km east of Bomassa in Jan 1996 and photographed later in captivity (FDL) as it was regrowing its primaries. It came from rather open-canopy forest with dense Marantaceae-Zingiberaceae understorey. Another bird was heard at Bomassa Camp on 17 Apr 1996, calling at dusk with c. 8 melancholy descending whistles (cf. Chappuis 1978). Two more were heard in open-canopy forest along the track from Bomassa to Ndoki Camp in 1997, one of them calling apparently in response to tape

playback of the long roulade of Fraser's Eagle Owl *Bubo poensis*. FDL observed similar reactions to a tape of *Bubo poensis* in two birds found in adjacent Lobéké Reserve of SE Cameroon (Apr 1997). This may be a defence reaction: other potential prey like *Galago demidoffi* also react vocally to tapes of *B. poensis*. This little-known species may be more widespread than supposed. Although Dowsett (1993) knew of no certain records from Gabon, Sargeant (1993) has since mentioned three, two of which he details.

Glaucidium capense Barred Owlet. First heard, seen and tape-recorded in Nouabalé-Ndoki N.P. in 1996, in open-canopy, semi-evergreen forest near the Ndoki and Mbéli Rivers (FDL). One bird was seen at close range at dusk, but the race could not be determined. During a systematic search in semi-evergreen forest along 25 km of track between Bomassa and Ndoki Camps in 1997, we located 18 birds with the help of tape playback. The territories discovered were clustered, with up to six birds occurring along 1.5 km of track, and much suitable habitat in intermediate areas apparently left unfilled. Barred Owlets have, throughout their range, two regular song-types, one of pure *hue* notes, the other of purred or rolled *kroor* notes (Dowsett & Dowsett-Lemaire 1993), and these seem to have different meanings. The *hue* song is often given spontaneously, at dusk or other times, and also for very long periods by birds who are probably unmated, and who show little interest in tape playback. The purred song is more frequently heard during territorial interactions between neighbours or when answering tape playback. The type of song given in response to playback also depended on the distance between the recorder and the birds: very distant birds (several hundred metres away) usually answered with the *hue* song whereas closer birds usually answered with a series of loud purrs — thus the purred song appears to have a more aggressive meaning. Tapes from three different populations were used for playback with equal success: *ethecopari* from Ivory Coast (Chappuis 1978), *capense* or *robertsi* from S Tanzania (Stjernstedt 1986) and *ngamiense* from Botswana (Gibbon 1991): playback of a single song (of either type) was usually sufficient to provoke a reaction.

Caprimulgidae

Caprimulgus binotatus Brown Nightjar. Several located in open-canopy forest (mainly dry-land but also on the edge of swamp forest) in Nouabalé-Ndoki N.P. (Apr–May 1997). Tape-recorded and mist-netted with the help of tape playback. Photographed. The curious voice and other features will be described elsewhere.

C. europaeus European Nightjar. A male was seen well on the road near Mboko (Odzala N.P.), 21 Dec 1994 (FDL). Identified mainly from its large size (significantly larger than Natal Nightjar *C. natalensis* and Long-tailed Nightjar *C. climacurus*, the two resident species in savanna) and the small amount of white at the end of the outer tail-feathers. A. Brosset (*in litt.*) reports one roosting in a plantation near Pointe-Noire, 11 Dec 1995.

C. sp./?prigoginei Nightjar sp. In addition to Bates's Nightjar *C. batesi*, which is confined to closed-canopy swamp forest, a third species of forest nightjar was

discovered in Nouabalé-Ndoki N.P. in 1996 (FDL), with three birds heard and taped again there in 1997. This small, dark species could not, unfortunately, be mist-netted. It occupies the same habitat as *C. binotatus* (open-canopy, dry-land forest), and the territories of the two species do not overlap. The song is a dry staccato somewhat reminiscent of that of *C. natalensis* but lower-pitched, of a different timbre, and delivered a little faster. An identical tape from the Itombwe forest of E Congo-Kinshasa (obtained by T. Butynski in 1996), whence came the only known specimen of Itombwe Nightjar *C. prigoginei* (Louette 1990), suggests that it may prove to be this species.

Macrodipteryx longipennis Standard-winged Nightjar. One or two, in non-breeding dress, seen three times on roads at night in Odzala N.P., between 16 Dec 1994 and 23 Jan 1995 (FDL).

Apodidae

Telacanthura melanopygia Chapin's Spinetail. Recorded as vagrants in Odzala N.P.: three on 22 Feb, one on 12 Aug 1994. Appears more common in Nouabalé-Ndoki N.P., with 2–3 birds seen almost daily (1996 and 1997) over open-canopy forest near the Ndoki R., and also on the Sangha R. in the evenings.

Apus pallidus Pallid Swift. At least one bird seen low down and heard (the distinctive calls are shriller, more grating than in European Swift *A. apus*), in Odzala N.P., 10–11 Feb 1995. Could easily be overlooked in large flocks of *A. apus*.

A. batesi Bates's Swift. A small group seen twice in Mar, and one bird on 13 Apr 1994 with a flock of *A. apus* (Odzala); one at Ndoki in Apr 1996. A small (much smaller than *A. apus*), glossy black swift with a distinctly forked tail, and a characteristic rapid flight.

Phoeniculidae

Phoeniculus castaneiceps Forest Wood-Hoopoe. A pair (male with black head and female brown-headed) seen twice in mid-Jan 1995 by A. Cruickshank (pers. comm.) in an area of open-canopy forest at Ikessi (Odzala N.P.); seen copulating on 15 Jan but deserted the area before Feb–Mar, perhaps following breeding failure. Evidently very rare, and seems to favour park-like country with very spaced out large trees. On 3 Apr 1996 FDL saw a male in rather open-canopy forest 2–3 km from Ndoki Camp. It was moving fast from one large tree to the next, giving a few songs in each; the song (tape-recorded) consisted of a succession of 7–9 loud whistles, remarkably similar to that of scimitarbills *Rhinopomastus* spp. On 5 Apr a male, probably the same one, was feeding silently in a large canopy party.

Rhinopomastus aterrimus Black Scimitarbill. A pair seen occasionally on the edge of gallery forest on the Lésio R. near Mah, in 1994–96 (L. Mastromatteo, pers. comm.). FDL did not find it in a recent brief visit there, but heard a Snowy-headed Robin-Chat *Cossypha niveicapilla* in a nearby thicket produce a remarkable imitation of its song! Occurs in nearby Congo-Kinshasa and known from the Téké Plateau in Gabon (Sargeant 1993; P. Christy *in litt.*).

Bucerotidae

Bycanistes subcylindricus Black-and-white Casqued Hornbill. Seen in pairs or small groups in secondary forest along the SW edge of Odzala N.P., especially near the village of Mbandza. Co-exists with its closest relative, the more widespread White-thighed Hornbill *B. cylindricus*. A pair also seen once near Bomassa on the Sangha (Apr 1996) and a single at Ndoki Camp (May 1997).

Indicatoridae

Melignomon zenkeri Zenker's Honeyguide. One, mist-netted (and photographed) at Ndoki Camp, 15 May 1997, was in full moult. The yellow feet and lower mandible, and yellow wash on the whole underparts are striking; wing-length was 72 mm, weight 21.7 g.

Indicator willcocksii Willcocks's Honeyguide. Several observations in dry-land and riparian forest in Odzala N.P., including one mist-netted and a regular song-post in the canopy of a 50 m tall *Piptadeniastrum* (FDL). Also frequent in the semi-evergreen forests of Nouabalé-Ndoki N.P., where five song-posts were located, all in the flat crowns of *Piptadeniastrum*. P. Christy (*in litt.*) has also noted the species's predilection for this tree at Ngotto Forest in Central African Republic. The song heard in N Congo and S Cameroon has a characteristic *tic* note at the end, and is identical to that presented by Chappuis (1981) from Chad.

Picidae

Mesopicos elliotii Elliot's Woodpecker. Already mentioned in Dowsett (1993) on the basis of a recent unpublished record from Odzala N.P.; common in the park, especially in swamp forest, and known to breed. Tape-recorded. Appears much scarcer in Nouabalé-Ndoki N.P., with only one observation (FDL).

Eurylaemidae

Smithornis capensis African Broadbill. Only one observation, in thick growth in a forest clearing on the SW edge of Odzala N.P., Mar 1995 (FDL). May also occur in thickets on the Téké Plateau, as known from this more natural habitat on the Gabon side (Sargeant 1993; P. Christy *in litt.*).

S. sharpei Grey-headed Broadbill. One male mist-netted in swamp forest at Odzala; one displaying at a height of 2 m just above Marantaceae undergrowth in closed-canopy, dry-land forest (FDL). Seems to occupy much lower levels in the forest than its more common relative, the Rufous-sided Broadbill *S. rufolateralis*, which was never mist-netted.

Hirundinidae

Riparia riparia European Sand Martin. Seen flying north, Odzala N.P., 30 Apr (four birds) and 1 May (two) 1994 (FDL).

R. paludicola African Sand Martin. One seen in Odzala N.P., 12 and 14 Aug 1994.

Hirundo fuliginosa Forest Swallow. Odzala N.P.: one flying north, 30 Dec 1993; one (in song), 28 Apr 1994 (FDL). Also 2–3 seen with other swallows between Lébangou and Etoumbi (SW of Odzala), 18 Jan 1994 (RJD). Small, compact, black swallow with a short forked tail, very different in silhouette from the longer-bodied

Psalidoprocne swallows, of which two species are resident in Odzala N.P. There are no known caves or large rocks in Odzala where *H. fuliginosa* might breed.

Hirundo preussi Preuss's Cliff Swallow. Odzala N.P.: two seen perched on a bush, early morning, next to several Red-throated Cliff Swallows *H. rufigula*, 1 May 1994; several, 4–18 Aug 1994. The buff-coloured chin and collar were clearly seen; the red patch behind the eye was only seen twice.

H. albigularis White-throated Swallow. One seen well over the airstrip (Odzala N.P.), 22 Aug 1994 (RJD), recognised from its glossy blue breast band and white throat.

Motacillidae

Anthus trivialis Tree Pipit. Three observations of single birds in Odzala savannas, 18 Oct 1994, 20 Nov 1994, 28 Feb 1995 (FDL). The Oct bird flew into the white wall of the park's office; it was ringed and released, apparently in good shape.

A. cervinus Red-throated Pipit. One stayed in a short-grass dambo in Odzala N.P., 13–24 Nov 1994. This heavily-streaked, darkish pipit called whenever flushed, a distinctive long, thin *tzeeee* or *dzeeee*, of nearly 1 s (cf. Pearson *in* Keith *et al.* 1992).

Campephagidae

Lobotos oriolinus Eastern Wattled Cuckoo-shrike. One male seen in a mixed bird party in the tall canopy of old secondary forest on the edge of Odzala N.P., Mar 1995 (FDL).

Turdidae

Cossypha cyanocampter Blue-shouldered Robin-Chat. Found only in thick Marantaceae-Zingiberaceae regrowth on the SW edge of Odzala N.P., and at Bomassa (FDL). Attracted to a tape playback (from East Africa) and answered human whistles with its own whistled song.

Oenanthe oenanthe European Wheatear. One on the newly-cleared airstrip of Odzala N.P., 19 Feb 1994.

Saxicola rubetra Whinchat. Included by Dowsett (1993) on the basis of two sightings in Odzala by A.P. Ziegler (pers. comm.) in Dec 1992 and Jan 1993. A few seen in savanna from late Nov 1994 to mid-Mar 1995, but not in 1993–4: may winter in some years and not others.

Sylviidae

Bathmocercus rufus Black-faced Rufous Warbler. Locally common in the understorey of fairly wet swamp forest at Odzala, with a mixture of Zingiberaceae-Marantaceae and young *Raphia* palms (FDL). Seen feeding young. Tape-recorded. Also a few records in Nouabalé-Ndoki N.P., in swamp forest (FDL).

Phylloscopus budongoensis Uganda Woodland Warbler. Full details on this species, including sonograms of the song, are published elsewhere (Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett 1996).

Cisticola cinnamomeus Pale-crowned Cisticola. We follow Tye (*in* Urban *et al.* 1997) in recognizing *C. cinnamomeus* as specifically distinct from Pectoral-patch Cisticola *C. brunnescens*. The two co-exist on the Téké Plateau, but in different habitats, with *cinnamomeus* local in bogs and *brunnescens* numerous in short dry grassland (FDL).

C. eximius Black-backed Cloud Cisticola. Frequent in the dambos of Odzala, as well as further south, in the vast swampy region of Owando and Oyo (0°30'–1°20'S, 16°E), where flooded dambos stretch for over 100 km from north to south. It favours wet, short-grass dambos (*Setaria anceps* being the dominant grass) as well as taller ones (2–2.5 m, with *Jardinea gabonensis*) where they are criss-crossed by muddy game tracks. It is very quick at colonising regrowth after fire: dozens arrived at a burnt 1-ha patch of dambo only the day following controlled burning and 10 were mist-netted in a couple of hours. Tape-recorded: there are two main song-types, both very different from recordings made in Chad and Nigeria (Chappuis 1974). The first song, uttered in wing-clapping flight, is a nasal, repetitive *dzuaah, dzuaah, dzuaah, ...* at a rate of two notes/s. When coming down or grounded, birds often give a second song, also disyllabic and repetitive (*tchic-pee, tchic-pee, tchic-pee*), with the second note strongly accentuated (sonograms in Dowsett-Lemaire 1997a). There are several call-notes, *truc-truc-truc*, or *trep-trep-trep...* only one of them resembling the cricket-type calls of the northern populations (Chappuis 1974). In breeding dress, *C. eximius* is readily identified as the only cloud cisticola with an unstreaked crown in all plumages, but in this population it is golden yellow, and not rufous. The dark-streaked back contrasts well with the yellow rump — rufous in other populations. The important vocal differences, coupled with plumage characters, suggest the Congo populations belong to a new, distinctive race. Six males mist-netted in Feb 1994 had wing lengths of 50, 52, 52.5, 53, 53 and 55 mm, and three weighed 11.7, 11.9 and 13 g in the morning. One female with an old brood patch had wing 50; three unsexed birds had wings 49.5, 50.5, 50.5 mm. Two other *Cisticola* warblers live alongside *C. eximius* in these dambos: *C. brunnescens*, but only in the drier sections and where the grass is short, and Greater Black-backed Cisticola *C. galactotes*, in clumps of tall wet grass.

Apalis jacksoni Black-throated Apalis. Common in pairs or family parties in the canopy of dry-land forest on the Odzala plateau (altitude 500–650 m). It is the most numerous of three sympatric *Apalis* warblers (the others being Black-capped Apalis *A. nigriceps* and Buff-throated Apalis *A. rufogularis*) in open-canopy forest, reaching densities of *c.* 20 pairs/km² (FDL). Tape-recorded: the song, given in asynchronous duet, is identical to that of E African montane populations of Rwanda, Uganda and Kenya (Fig. 1; see also Keith & Gunn 1971). It consists of repeated *tru* notes, distinctly rolled (in the case of the male), whereas those of the montane population *bambuluensis* of Cameroun (Chappuis 1979) and nearby Nigeria (FDL's observations on the Mambilla Plateau) consist of pure *puh, puh* notes.

A. nigriceps Black-capped Apalis. Very local, but quite common in a small area of open-canopy forest on the Odzala plateau at Ikessi (FDL). Pairs or family parties were usually seen there feeding in the foliage of medium-sized and taller trees (10–35 m) in small mixed parties with *A. jacksoni*, *A. rufogularis*, Rufous-crowned Eremomela *Eremomela badiceps*, Lemon-bellied Crombec *Sylvietta denti* and Chestnut-capped Flycatcher *Erythrocerus mccallii*. The male, sometimes answered

by shorter calls from the female, gave a dry trill very similar in timbre to those of *Eremomela badiceps* but of longer duration, as presented by Chappuis (1979) from Gabon; Chappuis correctly draws an analogy in rhythm between the vocalizations of this species and those of Chestnut-throated *Apalis A. porphyrolaema*.

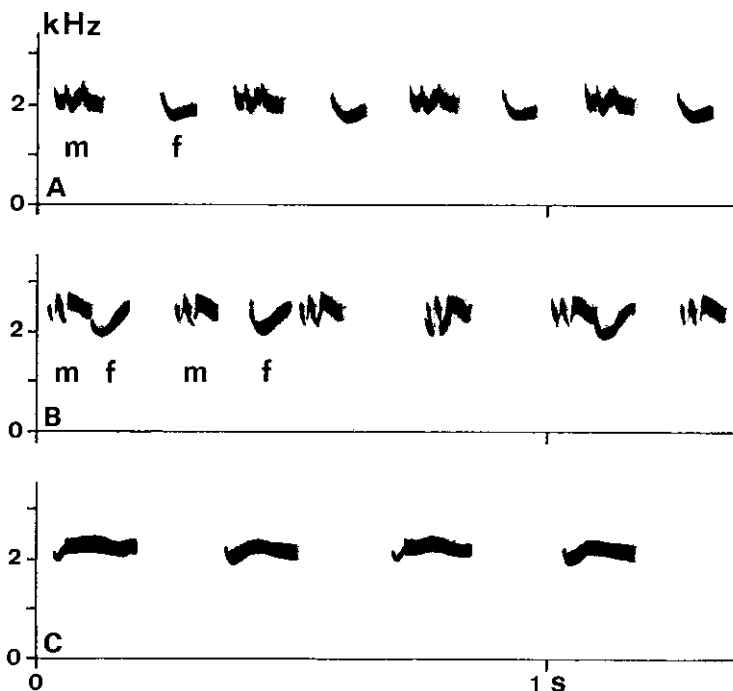


Figure 1. Songs of Black-throated *Apalis Apalis jacksoni* recorded in (A) Odzala N.P. in Congo, (B) Nyungwe in Rwanda (both by FDL) and (C) Mt Cameroon (Chappuis 1979). The notes produced in duet by male and female are identified by m and f.

A. goslingi Gosling's *Apalis*. Common in the dense foliage of riparian forest, but only on the edge of the two major rivers in Odzala N.P. (Lékoli and Mambili) whose wooded banks are fully exposed to sunlight (FDL). Also common in Nouabalé-Ndoki N.P. (Sangha, Ndoki and Mbéli R.). Tape-recorded.

Muscicapidae

Melaenornis pammelaina Southern Black Flycatcher. Dowsett & Dowsett-Lemaire (1989) recorded *M. edolioides* from the central Congo savannas, following Malbrant & Maclatchy (1949) and Salvan (1972). From the range, this is, of course, really the

Southern Black Flycatcher *M. pammelaina*, for which we also have personal observations from Odzala N.P.

Ficedula albicollis Collared Flycatcher. One in savanna, Odzala N.P., 6 Oct 1994, showed traces of full collar (thus excluding Half-collared Flycatcher *F. semitorquata*).

Muscicapa caerulescens Ashy Flycatcher. Local in open-canopy forest in Odzala and Nouabalé-Ndoki N.P., or along roads crossing forest, in pairs or family parties (FDL). The song, a short series of 3–4 detached descending notes, is the best way of detecting this species. One noted near Pointe-Noire in Dec 1995 by A. Brosset (*in litt.*).

Myioparus griseigularis Grey-throated Flycatcher. Frequent in the understorey of swamp forest (both parks); considerably more local in dry-land forest as it is found only under closed canopy. Tape-recorded: the main song-type is as described by Erard 1990. Completely separated ecologically from its congener Lead-coloured Flycatcher *M. plumbeus*, which occupies savanna thickets, *Hymenocardia* woodland, or (locally) the canopy of very open, park-like forest.

Platysteiridae

Batis poensis Fernando Po Batis. Frequent in Odzala and Nouabalé-Ndoki N.P., in tall trees of open forest, or emergents over closed canopy (*e.g.* in swamp forest), and also in scattered large trees left in cultivation on the edge of the parks (FDL).

Dyaphorophya tonsa White-spotted Wattle-eye. Very uncommon, but sighted at four different localities in Odzala N.P. and one at Ndoki, in the forest canopy, always higher than its congener the Chestnut Wattle-eye *D. castanea*.

Monarchidae

Elminia nigromitrata Dusky Crested Flycatcher. Found only in the understorey of swamp forest under closed canopy (Odzala and Nouabalé-Ndoki N.P.), where it is locally common. Tape-recorded.

Paridae

Parus funereus Dusky Tit. Widespread in open-canopy forest (Odzala and Nouabalé-Ndoki N.P.), where it is a noisy and very active leader of mixed bird parties. Encountered in groups of 6–8, usually with two juveniles that keep begging after fledging for at least three months. One group/km² in a grid area of 4 km² (Odzala).

Remizidae

Anthoscopus caroli Grey Penduline Tit. Uncommon in *Hymenocardia* woodland in Odzala N.P. A pair building a nest in Feb. One pair at Mah (FDL). This is the distinctive race *ansorgei*, with yellow forehead, bright yellow-green nape and mantle, and whitish underparts.

Nectariniidae

Nectarinia batesi Bates's Sunbird. This tiny canopy species is difficult to see well and its status remains uncertain. Definitely identified twice in Odzala N.P., including when a party of five spent some time feeding on the small fruits of *Macaranga assas* in riparian forest, alongside seven other sunbird species (Dowsett-Lemaire "1996").

The relatively short tail (shorter than in Little Green Sunbird *N. seimundi*), yellowish belly (more brightly coloured than in female Olive-bellied Sunbird *N. chloropygia*), and short curved bill are distinctive characters. Brosset & Erard (1986) note that it usually feeds in groups of 6–10.

Malaconotidae

Malaconotus bocagei Grey-green Bush-shrike. One pair duetting in tall secondary forest near Bomassa (FDL): the motif *pee-pee-pee-pee-pee* (accent on last note), answered by three *puik* from the mate, is similar to a *pee-pee-pee-puuu*, *pui-pui* recorded in W Uganda.

Sturnidae

Poeoptera lugubris Narrow-tailed Starling. Local, mainly on the W edge of Odzala N.P., where it is fairly common in secondary forest, in groups of 2–12.

Grafisia torquata White-collared Starling. A group of six with an adult male fed on fruit of *Macaranga assas* in Odzala N.P., 28 Sep 1994 (RJD). At least 20, including five adult males, fed on fruit of *Xylopia aethiopica* in the canopy of swamp forest, 20 Oct 1994 (FDL); they were also flycatching just over the canopy and indulged in group singing (a rather chirpy chatter) as other starlings often do outside the breeding season.

Ploceidae

Ploceus albinucha Maxwell's Black Weaver. Three groups of 15–20 located several times in the closed canopy of *Gilbertiodendron dewevrei* rain forest, along a 1.5 km path between the Mbéli and Ndoki Rivers (Apr 1996); two groups in the same habitat along the Wali stream near Bomassa, Apr-May 1997 (FDL). Their constant sizzling chatter drew attention. They seemed to feed entirely on insects in the canopy foliage. About 40% were grey-brown immatures.

P. bicolor Dark-backed Weaver. Only three sightings in Odzala N.P., of a male or pair in open canopy, twice in secondary forest on the edge of the park.

P. preussi Preuss's Golden-backed Weaver. Never found in Odzala N.P., but local in open-canopy forest in Nouabalé-Ndoki N.P., with three sightings of a pair or male (FDL).

P. dorsomaculatus Yellow-capped Weaver. Only three sightings in Odzala N.P., of a male or pair in mixed bird parties in semi-open canopy (FDL). The yellow-golden rather than chestnut-golden crown and small amount of black on the chin distinguish this species from *P. preussi*, as does the feeding behaviour, *P. dorsomaculatus* exploring the foliage and not the bark for insects. Reported once from near Bomassa (A. Cruickshank, unpubl.).

Malimbus coronatus Crowned Malimbe. Odzala N.P.: seen only three times in the closed canopy of swamp forest, twice in mixed bird parties, and once when nest-building (Mar) on the tip of a branch of spiny palm creeper *Ancistrophyllum secundiflorum* 9 m above the forest floor. Three birds (one female, two males) nest-building in Dec just W of Makoua (0°S, 15°30'E). Considerably more common in

Nouabalé-Ndoki N.P. (FDL), with pairs or trios building nests in several sites (Apr–May) in swamp and open-canopy dry-land forest.

Estrildidae

Spermophaga poliogenys Grant's Bluebill. One male and one pair mist-netted with Bluebill *S. haematina* in the understorey of *Gilbertiodendron* forest on the edge of swamp forest, Nouabalé-Ndoki N.P., May 1997. The small size (wing 67–69 mm) and red head of the males (with black of nape extending to middle of crown) are diagnostic. The female looks similar to that of *S. haematina* but was identified by its calls (given on release), soft *thac, thac*, very different from the metallic *pit, pit*, of *S. haematina*.

Uraeginthus angolensis Blue Waxbill. Several seen in Brazzaville gardens and frequently in the vicinity of Maya-Maya airport. Although these are the first reports for Congo, the species was already known from Kinshasa, on the opposite bank of the river (Schouteden 1958), and there is no reason to suppose a captive origin.

Species to be deleted from the Congo list

Melierax gabar Gabar Goshawk. Descarpentries & Villiers (1964) reported capturing this woodland species at Sibiti, but such a specimen cannot be traced in the Musée National d'Histoire Naturelle, Paris (C. Erard, pers. comm.). We believe it may have been misidentified, as were other specimens obtained by these collectors. We have failed to find this species elsewhere in Congo.

Caprimulgus tristigma Rock Nightjar. Reported from Sibiti by Descarpentries & Villiers (1964), but this specimen can not be traced either, and its occurrence must be considered doubtful on present knowledge.

Melaenornis edoliodes Western Black Flycatcher. Dowsett & Dowsett-Lemaire (1989) recorded this species from the central Congo savannas, following Malbrant & Maclatchy (1949) and Salvan (1972). From the range, this is, of course, really the Southern Black Flycatcher *M. pammelaina*.

Discussion

These 73 new additions bring the country's total to 639 species, close to the 647 known from nearby Gabon (Dowsett 1993, amended to take into account Sargeant 1993). Remaining gaps in the avifauna, when compared with Gabon and Congo-Kinshasa, concern fewer than a dozen non-vagrant species (cf. Dowsett & Forbes-Watson 1993).

Most of the 20 Palearctic species recently added to the country's avifauna were to be expected from their known occurrence in neighbouring countries. Several are, nevertheless, at the limit of their normal range, for example *Gallinago gallinago* and

Streptopelia turtur near their normal southern limits and *Aquila nipalensis* and *Glareola nordmanni* (both rare in West Africa) on the fringe of their passage routes south. The only really surprising occurrence is that of *Aythya ferina* which was completely unknown from Central Africa and not known to winter (outside East Africa) south of Nigeria (Dowsett & Forbes-Watson 1993: 118–121). Intra-African vagrants include *Porphyrio porphyrio*, which has recently been added to the Cameroon and Gabon lists (Manners *et al.* 1993; P. Christy *in litt.*). *Hirundo albicularis* is previously unknown from further north than S Congo-Kinshasa, with the exception of one Cameroon report (Wilson 1989) which is not entirely convincing (in particular the “greyish underparts”) and should be rejected for the time being.

Among African non-forest elements, the main surprise is the discovery of a large population of *Cisticola eximius*, hitherto unknown south of the Guineo-Congolian forest block. The nearest populations are in the Guinea savanna of Nigeria (Elgood *et al.* 1994) and Chad (by Chappuis 1974), with two specimen records in N Congo-Kinshasa, one on the Uelle River in the north-east (Chapin 1953), and the other on the Ubangui River at 20°E (Schouteden 1955). The dambos of Cameroon and Central African Republic would be worth searching for this species.

Before this study, only the forests of Bas-Kouilou and the Mayombe in SW Congo were reasonably well-known (Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett 1991). The Mayombe is at the southern limit of the Gabon forest, and it is not surprising that the forests of N Congo proved slightly richer. Of the 38 new forest resident species newly discovered in Odzala and Nouabalé-Ndoki N.P., 31 were already known from neighbouring NE Gabon (Brosset & Erard 1986, Robertson 1995), with one other (*Ploceus albinucha*) from the extreme north. Exceptions include *Phoeniculus castaneiceps*, previously known only from the northern margins of the Guineo-Congolian forest block (Chapin 1939, Snow 1978), including Ngotto Forest in neighbouring C.A.R., a recent discovery (Dowsett *et al.* *in press*). While the semi-evergreen open-canopy forests of Nouabalé-Ndoki are indeed on the northern margin of the Guineo-Congolian block, it is perhaps more surprising to find it in Odzala N.P., on the southern margin, but this is only 250 km to the SW, the intervening area being occupied mainly by open-canopy forest.

Glaucidium capense was also recently discovered in similarly semi-evergreen forest in C.A.R. (Dowsett *et al.* *in press*) and in SE Cameroon (*pers. obs.*, *in prep.*). There is no reason to suppose that this species will not also be found in suitable habitat along the northern edge of the Guineo-Congolian forest block in Congo-Kinshasa. Specimens are needed to identify the race, but the most likely to be expected in Congo-Brazzaville, in the case of a continuum between the populations of Central Africa and E Congo-Kinshasa, is *castaneum*.

The discovery of *Spermophaga poliogenys* just east of the Sangha R. in Nouabalé-Ndoki N.P. represents an extension of range from western Congo-Kinshasa (Hall & Moreau 1970); the species should be looked for in adjacent forest in C.A.R. and Cameroon.

Of other forest species, three are usually encountered at medium to high altitudes, and their presence in Odzala could not have been predicted: *Smithornis sharpei* is locally distributed in mid-altitude forest in Cameroon, N Gabon and Bioko on the one hand, and in E Congo-Kinshasa on the other (Chapin 1953, Hall & Moreau 1970).

Phylloscopus budongoensis occurs in E Africa and Congo-Kinshasa at 1100–1900 m (Chapin 1953, Britton 1980); it was recently confirmed from the Bélinga region in NE Gabon (Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett 1996), at an altitude of 500–900 m (Erard 1989), and found even lower (400–600 m) in Odzala N.P. We have recently discovered it at a similar altitude (above 400 m) in Lobéké Reserve, SE Cameroon (Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett in prep.). *Apalis jacksoni* is montane almost everywhere in its wide range, inhabiting the upland forests of Angola, Cameroon-Nigeria, the Albertine Rift and Kenya. It is common at 1000–2300 m in Congo-Kinshasa (Chapin 1953), up to 2500 m in Rwanda (Dowsett-Lemaire 1990) and 2400 m in Kenya (Britton 1980). The Odzala population is geographically close to the Dja region in S Cameroon, and only about 100 km east of the one known locality in Gabon (Robertson 1995). It is quite numerous on the Odzala plateau, but only above 500 m, where canopy trees draped in *Usnea* lichens are indicative of a cooler microclimate. *Apalis jacksoni* was not found in the forests of Nouabalé-Ndoki, which lie at a lower altitude (c. 350 m) and are almost devoid of *Usnea* lichens, but was recently discovered in adjacent Lobéké Reserve of SE Cameroon, above 500 m (Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett in prep.). In the Mayombe hills, *Usnea* appears only above 500 m, and it is there that we found relict populations of two montane species, Crossley's Ground Thrush *Zoothera crossleyi* and Pink-footed Puffback *Dryoscopus angolensis* (Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett 1989).

These relict populations can give us important clues to the history and dispersal routes of montane avifaunas. The vocal dialect of *A. jacksoni* in Odzala points to an E African origin, even though the montane population of the Cameroon highlands is geographically closer. The one specimen obtained at Angu on the Uelle River in N Congo-Kinshasa (Chapin 1953) may be on the linking route and more intermediate populations may be found in the future where the microclimate is suitable.

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