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10 min., presumably to brood the chicks, while the male sang softly and intermittently on a nearby branch. The pair flew off together. The nest was observed on most days during the subsequent week, and the pair was still bringing food to it, arriving with food together, until I then left the area. Mar–Apr marks the beginning of the rains in that part of Cameroon.

Reference

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Françoise Dowsett-Lemaire

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12 rue des Lavandes, F-34190 Ganges, France

The status of Black Cuckoo *Cuculus clamosus* and Red-chested Cuckoo *C. solitarius* in Benin

Black Cuckoo *Cuculus clamosus* is known in Benin from only a single report in Oustalet (1898), who records *Coccyzus cafer* based on two skins collected by Miègemark at Porto Novo and Adjara in January and February 1895. Dowsett & Dowsett-Lemaire (1993) consider that further proof of its presence in the country is required. The species is known as a wet season migrant to the savanna in Togo, Nigeria and Ghana (Cheke & Walsh 1996, Elgood *et al.* 1994, Grimes 1987). It has been recorded in Burkina Faso but not in Niger (Dowsett & Dowsett-Lemaire 1993).

I recorded a single bird on 13 June 1997, in an area of orchard bush near the Forêt Classée of Ouari Maro (9°12'N, 2°10'E). It was feeding amongst the leaves of a low fruit bush, hanging in acrobatic positions as it searched through the foliage, presumably for small insects. It was entirely black, with a curved, cuckoo-like, black bill, and small white spots at the tip of the relatively long tail, with no trace of barring apparent on the underparts (cf. Zimmermann *et al.* 1996). The occurrence of this species is not surprising, and this wet season observation confirms it on the Benin list.

Red-chested Cuckoo *C. solitarius* is known in Benin from observations by J.F. Walsh in the Ouémé valley at Vossa (8°24'N, 2°20'E) and at M'bétékoukou (7°45'N, 2°29'E), and by R.A. Cheke in June 1983 of one calling beside the Beffa River near Vossa (Dowsett & Dowsett-Lemaire 1993, R.A. Cheke and J.F. Walsh *in litt.*). In Togo it is "a not uncommon resident and seasonal migrant to thick gallery forest as far north as Naboulgou [10°9'N, 0°49'E], Apr–Sep" (Cheke & Walsh 1996). It has a similar status in Nigeria (Elgood *et al.* 1994).

I recorded this species frequently, along the gallery forest of the River Ouémé and its tributary the Terou, and in the remnant forest in the Forêt Classée of Ouari Maro,

from early April to September, when it is very vocal, with a further record of three birds at Tanougou (10°48'N, 1°29'E) on 24 Jun 1997. It was not recorded in this area by Green & Sayer (1977). Identification was initially by call (cf. Gibbon 1991), and several birds were seen. Voice counts suggest that it is fairly common in this area at this season, giving it a status similar to that in Togo and Nigeria.

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Patrick Claffey
B.P. 302, Parakou, Benin

Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla*, new to Benin

On the evening of 23 March 1997, while investigating the gallery scrub and the pools of the almost dry bed of the Ouémé River at Bétérou in N Benin, I came across a small flock of some 10–12 birds in a thicket, all apparently of the same species. They were active and difficult to see in the heavy vegetation. However, I got several good views of one individual, which stayed perched for several minutes.

The most striking feature was the black cap going down to the forehead. The shape of the birds was plump and rounded. The upperparts were of a grey-brown colour, the underparts greyish white. My conclusion was that it was a Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla*. The other distant possibility would be Orpheaan Warbler *S. hortensis*, which has been sparingly recorded in both Niger (Giraudoux *et al.* 1988) and N Nigeria (Elgood *et al.* 1994). In this case the black in the head did not correspond with that of *S. hortensis*. Neither is there any reason to believe it was Sardinian