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New bird records for the Korup Project Area, southwest Cameroon

by K.S. Bobo$^{1,2}$, M. Walter$^2$, M. Fichtler$^2$ & M. Mühlenberg$^2$

$^1$Ministry of Environment and Forestry, Department of Wildlife and Protected Areas. Yaounde, Cameroon. <bobokadiri@yahoo.fr>
$^2$Centre for Nature Conservation (Dept.I), Georg-August University, Von-Siebold-Strasse 2, 37075 Göttingen, Germany.

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Abstract

Twelve new bird species are reported from Korup Project Area, giving a total of 419 species so far recorded there. Seven species previously recorded only once or twice are confirmed. Most of the species newly added have their principal range in savanna.

Résumé

Nouveaux records d’oiseaux pour la zone du projet Korup, sud-ouest Cameroun. Douze nouvelles espèces sont listées, élevant à 419 le nombre d’espèces d’oiseaux jusqu’à lors observées dans la Zone du Projet Korup. Sept espèces sont aussi présentées pour leur confirmation. La plupart de ces espèces sont connues principalement des zones de savane.

Introduction

The Korup Project Area (KPA) in SW Cameroon, adjoining the border with Nigeria, includes Korup National Park (KNP), three Forest Reserves (Nta Ali, Ejagham and Rumpi Hills) and logging concessions and communal land, covered to a large extent by closed forest. It encompasses roughly 5000 km$^2$ and lies mainly below 850 m but includes forested peaks of which the highest is Mt Rata (1768 m) in the Rumpi Hills.

The avifauna of this area is one of the best known in Cameroon, with high diversity due to the variety of habitats, from coastal mangroves and swamp forests, rivers, lowland and sub-montane forest with both Atlantic and continental influences, and various derived land uses. The proximity of the area to the savanna belt further increases the diversity.

The first published ornithological accounts from the KPA were those of Agland (in Gartlan 1984) and Thomas (1991), while an intensive 36-month survey was
conducted by Rodewald et al. (1994) between 1990 and 1993. The latter included information from lowland forests and montane areas, and indicated that up to 1993, 390 bird species had been found in KPA. More records were provided by Green & Rodewald (1996) bringing the total to 407.

The present report is a compilation of recent observations in the area around Abat-Mgbegati-Basu, which lies between 5°21’ N and 5°25’ N and 9°9’ E and 9°13’ E in the Korup Support Zone (Fig. 1), which is that part of the KPA, as defined by Rodewald et al. (1994), outside the KNP.

**Study area and methods**

The area is flat, between 200 and 250 m a.s.l. At Nguti (Fig. 1), annual rainfall and average temperature were 3809 mm and 27.4°C (with average monthly maximum of 33.2°C) in 2002 (Nambu 2003).

Primary forests in the area have mostly only been converted to other land use close to villages, but conversion seemed to be increasing compared to the period 1998–2002 (BKS & WM pers. obs.). The bird species discussed here were observed in natural or logged lowland forest, as well as in adjacent land use types of which agroforestry (cocoa, coffee) and annual cultures of maize and cassava are the most prominent. More severe in terms of area converted is the establishment of large oil-palm plantations.

Almost as much time was spent in farmland as in forest. Most surveys were in the form of point counts (Bibby et al. 1995), during the dry season Dec 2003 to Mar 2004, while studying land use effects on bird communities (Walters et al. in press).

Additional observations were obtained during a survey of Grey-necked Picathartes *Picathartes oreas* between Dec 2000 and Feb 2001 (Fichtler 2002). Repeated visits were made to plots in four different habitat types: natural (old-growth) forests, secondary forests, agroforestry (cocoa, coffee) and annual cultures (maize, cassava). Natural forests were along the Mgbegati–Basu road, secondary forests along Mgbegati–Abat road, cocoa-coffee farms along Abat–Basu road and annual crops along Abat–Bajo road (Fig. 1). Six plots were established in each habitat. Each was visited nine times within the study period, for 20 min. between 6h00 and 9h00. Species were identified using mainly Borrow & Demey (2001) and Kemp & Kemp (1998). Unfamiliar bird voices were taped and confirmed using Chappuis (2000). Status (from Rodewald et al. 1994) is: R (resident); PM (Palaearctic migrant); AM (intra-African migrant); LM (local movements).

**Results**

Species recorded for the first time in KPA are indicated by an asterisk. The others have previously been recorded only once or twice in the area.
Accipitridae

*Circaetus beaudouini* Beaudouin’s Snake-eagle. An adult male flying over a cocoa-coffee farm beside the Abat–Basu road, 26 Feb 2004. [L.M. Normally further north, but could appear during dry season (Borrow & Demey 2001, Kemp & Kemp 1998).]

Falconidae
*Falco cuvierii* African Hobby. Two atop a large tree at the border of a farm and secondary forest near Abat, 21 Jan 2004. [L.M.]

Rallidae
*Sarothrura elegans* Buff-spotted Flufftail. One calling at sunset at secondary forest edge, Mgbegeati, 19 Jan 2004. [R. First seen in KPA in 1992 (Green & Rodewald 1996).]

Cuculidae

Trogonidae
Meropidae

Picidae

Hirundinidae
Hirundo aethiopica Ethiopian Swallow. Two seen in Mundemba town, 20 and 23 Jan 2001. [Well known to the coast in Nigeria, but few records so far south in Cameroon. A pair at Mundemba, between Dec 1994 and Feb 1995 (Green & Rodewald 1996).]

Motacillidae
*Anthus pallidiventris Long-legged Pipit. A pair seen many times along Abat–Bajo road near farmland, and two couples regularly seen on Abat football field. [R, frequent. Unconfirmed reports by several observers near Baro and south of Mundemba (Green & Rodewald 1996). One unpublished record at Baro (E. Williams per M. Languy pers. comm.).]  

Campephagidae
Campephaga phoenicea Red-shouldered Cuckoo-shrike. A pair in the canopy of a tree in a cocoa-coffee farm, 12 Jan 2004. A male and two females or young seen twice on a tree at the edge of a farm near Abat, 28 Jan and 21 Feb 2004. [LM. Only previous dry season record in Korup was at Baro (Green & Rodewald 1996). Generally a savanna species (Louette 1981), moving northward during the rains (Borrow & Demey 2001).]

Sylviidae
*Acrocephalus arundinaceus Great Reed Warbler. Many individuals singing at different locations: one in Nguti in dense tall grasses near a small stream, 15 Jan 2001; one at Pamol Plantation, 5 Jan 2001; one in garden in Mundemba, 26 Jan 2001; one in Mundemba in dense grasses near a small stream, 23 Feb 2001. [PM, frequent.]  

*Tsipra icterina Icterine Warbler. One seen in heavily degraded forest along the main road south of Nguti, 2 Jan 2001. [PM.]

Turdidae
*Luscinia megarhynchos Nightingale. One singing at noon in a bush in oil palm plantations at Makeke, Mundemba, 26 Jan 2001. [PM].

Monarchidae

Timaliidae
*Phyllanthus atripennis Capuchin Babbler. A flock of four seen and heard in secondary forest understorey along the Mgbegeati–Abat road, 5 Jan 2004. [R].
**Nectariniidae**


*Cinnyris cupreus* Copper Sunbird. Two couples seen on farmland along Abat–Bajo road, 14, 15, 28 and 29 Jan 2004. [R/LM, frequent].

**Laniidae**

*Lanius senator* Woodchat Shrike. One seen many times on small trees in a farm area near Abat, 28 Jan to 28 Feb 2004. One hunting from an electrical line south of Mundemba, 22–23 Jan 2001. [PM, first observed in an oil palm plantation, 28 Dec 1994 (Green & Rodewald 1996).]

**Discussion**

Twelve species appear to be new for the Korup region, making a total of 419 bird species in KPA including KNP. Most of the new species are local migrants (*sensu* Green & Rodewald 1996) from savanna less than 30 km to the north. Many more species probably remain to be discovered as new sites are surveyed.

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**References**


