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NOTES ON BIRDS
OBSERVED IN GAMBIA AND SENEGAL
IN NOVEMBER 1984

by Stefan Ericsson

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INTRODUCTION

During a period of two weeks, Nov 12 - Nov 26 1984, Ake Nordström and myself travelled in Gambia and in western Casamance, Senegal, visiting the following areas:

Nov 12 - 16: Within 20 km from Fajara, including Kotu Stream S of Fajara, Abuko Nature Reserve near Lamin, Bund road W of Banjul and Cape Creek/Camaloo SE of Bakau.

Nov 16 - 18: Trip to Ziguinchor, Senegal, with bird notes from Séléti close to the gambian border.

Nov 19 - 20: Tendaba N of Kwinella.

Nov 21: With the river-boat "Lady Chilel Jawara" to Basse, the sun rising W of Kuntaur.

Nov 21 - 23: Prufu Swamp area E and NE of Basse.

Nov 23 - 24: Jakhaly Swamp (now drained) SE of Kudang.

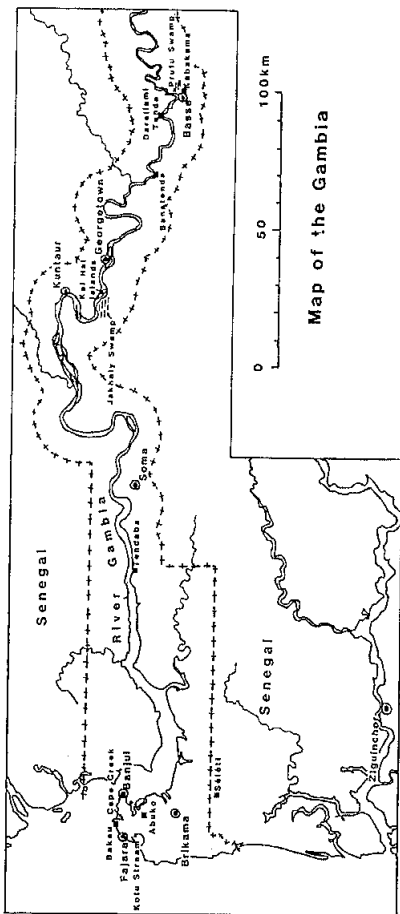
Nov 25: Bund road W of Banjul.

Nov 26: Abuko Nature Reserve.

Two checklists of birds in Gambia have been published recently. The first by Jensen & Kirkeby (1980), is an annotated checklist, with maps showing the dry season distribution of most species and a chapter on well-known localities. The distributional data is largely based on notes from visiting British and Scandinavian ornithologists. The second by Gore (1981) is a comprehensive checklist which presents a more critical view than Jensen & Kirkeby, carefully deleting several species which are known from doubtful sight-records.

A comparison of the two lists also reveals that a number of species which Jensen & Kirkeby considered to occur rather frequently, are considered by Gore to be rarer, probably because Gore did not include many unpublished records.

Since these checklists often show contradictory views on the distribution of birds in this area we report in this paper observations of birds which serve to fill some gaps in the published literature.



The nomenclature follows Morony, Bock & Farrand 1975, while English names follow Gore 1981. Since all observations were made in November 1984, only the day of observation is mentioned (in brackets). Place-names correspond to the 1:250 000 map "the Gambia" published by the Survey Department, Banjul 1980. Jensen & Kirkeby 1980 is abbreviated to "J & K".

THE BIRDLIST

Tachybaptus ruficollis - Dabchick: 2 at the sewage farm SW of Fajara (13); 1 on the river close to Kai Hai Islands (21) was further inland than previously known.

Egretta intermedia - Yellow-billed Egret: 1 noted near Banatenda (21) and another in Prufu Swamp (22). Gore notes "All records are from Lower River", J & K maps the species from the whole country.

Pandion haliaetus - Osprey: 1 close to Kai Hai Islands (21). Rare above Bambatenda (Gore).

Circaetus gallicus - Short-toed Eagle: According to Gore, wintering C. g. gallicus has in many cases been confused with resident C. g. beaudouini, winter records from Lower River should most likely be by C. g. gallicus. We observed a few adults of both subspecies under excellent conditions near Tendaba Tourist Safari Camp (20), and also both subspecies, separately, on Upper River (21) a few times.

Accipiter tachiro - West African Goshawk: 1 in Abuko Nature Reserve (16) and 1 seen E of Georgetown (21).

Podica senegalensis - Finfoot: 1 on the river SW of Darsilami Tenda.

Pluvianus aegyptius - Crocodile Bird: 15 resting on the north bank at Basse (21,23).

Charadrius marginatus - White-fronted Sand-plover: 2 at the mouth of Cape Creek (14).

Numenius arquata - Curlew: A few seen S of Kuntaur (21). This agrees with J & K, but was further inland than the limit given by Gore.

Chlidonias leucoptera - White-winged Black Tern: 4 at the sewage farm SW of Fajara (13).

Anous minutus - Black Noddy: 1 at the mouth of Cape Creek with some 1000 Chlidonias nigra (14). In good light at 200 m distance, a sketch of the bird and the following notes were made:

"A tern, larger than a Chlidonias nigra, but about equally smaller than a Larus cirrocephalus (direct comparison). A rather slim, short-necked bird holding its body in a horizontal position. Bill long and slender. Tail broad, somewhat pointed, with a notch visible only at a few occasions. The bird appears completely black, except for the absolutely white cap, extending from base of bill and about equally far behind the eyes. The white appears to be rather sharply adjoining the black of backhead. Also a small white spot below the eye". Furthermore, the

sketch shows that the black lores adjoins the white cap in an almost straight line.

Twenty minutes later the flock of terns flew NW to the sea, but was seen again later (including the Anous minutus) from Cape Point, at great distance.

The two noddies Anous stolidus and A. minutus are very similar, but shape and extent of the black area in front of eye are good field-marks (Oreel 1981). According to Gore and J & K there is only one record from Gambia, one bird spending almost a month in the same area in 1977. There is also a recent record from Mauritania (Hazevoet 1985).

Streptopelia roseogrisea - Rose-grey Dove: 4 were seen in Prufu Swamp (22), with abundant Streptopelia turtur, S. decipiens and S. vinacea. The birds looked similar to the European Streptopelia decaocto. They were conspicuously pale compared to the other species present, and the underwing was not dark. Gore states that it occurs in rural areas in Lower River, while J & K rejects such records on the grounds that this bird is typical of the semi-desert. Our record is close to the middle reaches of Senegal River, where it is common (Snow 1978).

Tauraco persa - Green Touraco: Seen on several occasions in Abuko Nature Reserve, where it was most conspicuous. It was also seen N of Séléti, in forest along the upper reaches of Allahein River, on both sides of the border (17). The locality connects the previously known sites in Gambia shown by J & K.

Centropus grillii - Black Coucal: 2 seen close to dam locks at Jakhaly Swamp (23). A rare bird in Gambia, but found almost exclusively in this area (Gore and J & K). The draining of this swamp was no doubt a great loss to the bird life of Gambia. Very few wetland birds were seen by us during our stay there.

Bubo lacteus - Milky Eagle-Owl: Considered scarce by Gore and J & K, but noted by us on 3 occasions: several in Senegal in dense Guinea savanna-forest N of Séléti (16), 1 in forest on southern side of Prufu Swamp (21) and 1 NE of the dam locks at Jakhaly Swamp (23).

Scotornis climacurus - Long-tailed Nightjar: The only nightjar positively identified by us: A few near Kabakama (21) where nightjars were abundant. Also noted from Jakhaly Swamp (23).

Apus pallidus - Mouse-coloured Swift: According to Gore easily overlooked on passage when large numbers of Apus apus are present. During our stay, the latter species was not identified with certainty, while the former were seen in flocks in Fajara (13-14), S of lower Kotu Stream (13,15), over and W of Banjul (15).

Ceryle maxima - Giant Kingfisher: 1 flying over the river at Georgetown (21).

Alcedo quadibrachys - Shining-blue Kingfisher: 2 were fishing near Jakhaly Swamp, along the major canal leading from the dam lock to the river (24). Previously only noted from 3 localities, all on Lower River, and always singly (Gore).

Eurystomus glaucurus - Broad-billed Roller: Noted on many occasions, and common along the river. A marked southern movement occurred during our stay. Most conspicuous at Tendaba (20), where some 20 flocks of over 100 were seen, flying south across the river.

Indicator maculatus - Spotted Honey-Guide: 1 in Abuko Nature Reserve (26).

Indicator minor - Lesser Honey-Guide: 2 in Abuko Nature Reserve (15).

Jynx torquilla - European Wryneck: 1 in dense scrub close to the river N of Jakhaly Swamp (24). In both checklists this species is only mentioned from lower river. Gore suggests that it may have been overlooked inland.

Campethera nivosa - Buff-spotted Woodpecker: 1 in Abuko Nature Reserve (26). According to Gore recorded 6 times, 5 at this locality.

Mirafra rufocinnamomea - Flappet Lark: About 5 flushed several times on dry sandy ground in the NW part of Prufu Swamp (22). Only 4 records mentioned by Gore, but it was expected to occur in this area.

Riparia paludicola - African Sand Martin: 6 flying overhead heading S near Tendaba Tourist Safari Camp (20). Only 4 previous records from Gambia (Gore and J & K).

Riparia riparia - European Sand Martin: Observed in small flocks in Tendaba (20), a few seen near Banatenda (21) and in central Prufu Swamp (22). The last 2 records were further up river than reported by J & K. Gore states that records are few.

Hirundo smithii - Wire-tailed Swallow: Observed in the Fajara area several times, but also 2 at "Chamoi bridge" E of Basse (22). Rare inland (Gore).

Psalidoprocne obscura - Fanti Rough-winged Swallow: Seen twice at the pool in Abuko Nature Reserve: 5 immatures (15) and 2 adults and 7 immatures (16). Not seen during a later visit (26). A rare species recorded several times at this locality (Gore). Immature birds were before thought to be Petrochelidon fuliginosa (e.g. by J & K). This was corrected by Gore, who also deleted P. fuliginosa from the Gambian list.

Macronyx croceus - Yellow-throated Long-Claw: Apart from 2 birds at Camaloo (15), 2 were also seen near Tendaba Tourist Safari Camp (19) in drier area of a marsh.

Phyllastrephus scandens - Leaf-Love: 1 in Ficus-grove SW of Fajara (13).

Bleda canicapilla - Grey-headed Bristle-bill: 2 at Abuko Nature Reserve (16).

Nicator chloris - West African Nicator: 1 in Abuko Nature Reserve (15).

Lanius collurio - Red-backed Shrike: 1 female of the collurio-group perching in a dry bush near dry saltflat 2 km E of Tendaba Tourist Safari Camp (19). According to Gore, this was the third record for Gambia, and the second of this group.

Acrocephalus schoenobaenus - Sedge Warbler: 1 seen in reeds E of Bakau (14).

Acrocephalus scirpaceus - Reed Warbler: 1 seen W of Banjul (25).

Apalis flavida - Yellow-chested Apalis: 2 seen just outside Abuko Nature Reserve (16).

Hypergerus atriceps - Moho: A pair seen on several occasions in mangrove and scrub adjacent to Bakotu Hotel SW of Fajara (15-27).

Hylia prasina - Green Hylia: 1 seen in Abuko Nature Reserve (16).

Bradornis pallidus - Pale Flycatcher: 1 in Abuko Nature Reserve (15). 1 in forest in Prufu Swamp (22). J & K give records for most of the country, while Gore writes that the species is confined to Lower River.

Zosterops senegalensis - Yellow White-Eye: 2 seen beside the river SW of Darsilami Tenda (21). Not previously reported as far inland in Gambia.

Amadina fasciata - Cut-throat Weaver: A few seen at Tendaba Tourist Safari Camp (20), in Prufu Swamp (22) and at Jakhaly Swamp (23). Gore gives no records for Upper River.

Vidua orientalis - Broad-tailed Paradise Whydah: J & K and Gore agree that the species is scarce. In Upper River we saw it first about 30 km W of Basse (21), then rather abundantly in Prufu Swamp, especially in its drier NW-part (22).

Lamprotonis chloropterus - Lesser Blue-eared Glossy Starling: Positively identified only once: A few allowing close approach in good light 2 km SW Tendaba Tourist Safari Camp (20). Lamprotonis starlings were numerous throughout the country, but only a few could be satisfactorily examined. L. chalybaeus (Blue-eared Glossy Starling) was not detected. To me it is still not clear which one of these starlings is most widespread in Gambia. Gore does not discuss at all the view presented by J & K that it should be L. chloropterus.

Spreo pulcher - Chestnut-bellied Starling: 1 seen in Senegal N of Sélét (16).

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SUMMARY

Observations made during a two week visit to Gambia and Senegal in November 1984 provide additional information on the distribution of 45 species of bird, including a new record for Gambia of the Black Noddy Anous minutus.

RESUME

Les observations effectuées pendant un voyage de deux semaines en Gambie et au Sénégal en novembre 1984 fournissent des données complémentaires sur la distribution de 45 espèces d'oiseaux, y compris l'observation nouvelle pour la Gambie du Noddi noir Anous minutus.

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