



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



**Join the WAOS and support
the future availability of free
pdfs on this website.**

<http://malimbus.free.fr/member.htm>

If this link does not work, please copy it to your browser and try again.

If you want to print this pdf, we suggest you begin on the next page (2) to conserve paper.

**Devenez membre de la
SOOA et soutenez la
disponibilité future des pdfs
gratuits sur ce site.**

<http://malimbus.free.fr/adhesion.htm>

Si ce lien ne fonctionne pas, veuillez le copier pour votre navigateur et réessayer.

Si vous souhaitez imprimer ce pdf, nous vous suggérons de commencer par la page suivante
(2) pour économiser du papier.

NEW RECORDS OF PALAEARCTIC MIGRANTS IN GABON

by Patrice Christy

Received 26 May 1989

Revised 20 November 1989

INTRODUCTION

The avifauna of Gabon has previously been compiled by Malbrant & Maclatchy (1949), and updated by Rand et al. (1959) and Brosset & Erard (1977).

This note summarises observations of hitherto unrecorded Palaearctic migrants, observed at four localities in Gabon:

- (a) Owendo (0°18N, 9°31E), the new port area of Libreville;
- (b) The mouth of Moka (0°39N, 9°28E), a mangrove creek at the edge of Mondah Bay, north of Libreville;
- (c) Cap Lopez, north-west of Port-Gentil (0°43S, 8°44E);
- (d) Gamba (2°43S, 10°00E).

Observers were as follows: PC: Patrice Christy; PAM: Peter Alexander-Marrack; DS: Dave Sargeant; GC: Geneviève Chamagne; PB: Pierre Bulens; HB: Hemme Batjes.

RESULTS

1. Pacific Golden Plover Pluvialis fulva

The inclusion of Greater Golden Plover Pluvialis apricaria on the list of birds collected in Gabon by du Chaillu was considered doubtful (Malbrant & Maclatchy 1949) until, in 1954, a new specimen was found in the Gulf of Guinea, at São Tomé. The bird was then identified as the western Palaearctic Greater Golden Plover (Frade 1958) but later referred to American Golden Plover P. dominica (Frade and Vieira dos Santos 1977). The wintering range of the Greater Golden Plover in Africa is normally restricted to the N African coast, while the Pacific Golden Plover is known as a regular winter visitor from the eastern Palaearctic to E Africa and as a vagrant to southern Africa (Urban et al. 1986). Sight records of 'Golden Plovers' in Nigeria (Elgood 1982) and at least one from Ghana (Grimes 1987) were presumed by those authors to be 'Lesser' Golden Plover.

In Gabon, there are the following records of Pluvialis fulva:

A female, collected on 10 Nov 1974, and a male, collected on 28 Oct 1978, on the sand beach at Owendo (A. Barbon, pers. comm.).

An individual observed from 20 Feb to 13 Mar 1983 on the Owendo mudflats, associating with a group of Curlew Sandpiper Calidris ferruginea and Little Stint Calidris minuta, but not coming into contact with the few Grey Plovers Pluvialis squatarola also present on the mudflats. The Pacific Golden Plover moved with the sandpipers, joining their flights towards the feeding places and roosting with them on a shingly dry area, in contrast with the Grey Plovers which normally rested on the fringe of the young mangrove trees, at the waters edge (PC).

An individual observed at Cap Lopez, on 18 Apr 1987; the bird frequented a freshwater permanent pond, located behind the beach, with Palaearctic and African waders. A single bird at the same locality on 17 May 1987 showed faint moult on the belly. Further sightings of single birds near a pig farm on an old beach ridge covered by short grass, were made on 9 Dec 1987 (PC), 3 Jan 1988 (PAM), and from 22 Oct 1988 to 19 Nov 1988 (several observers). From 4 Jan to 4 Feb 1989, a flock of five birds was regularly seen in the same area. Numbers increased to seven birds on 18 Feb, five were still present on 14 Mar (PC, GC) and six on 2 Apr 1989 (PAM, DS, PB). All birds showed the brownish-grey underwing in flight; varying amounts of golden spots on the upperparts, the distinct yellowish supercilium and the round dark patch on the ears. Their size and slenderness were easily estimated when they joined a few Grey Plovers on the beach.

A single bird seen in the same area on 26 Dec 1987 and 3 Jan 1988 had much greyer plumage on upper and underparts, and was relatively unspotted on the upperparts; this was probably the Nearctic vagrant American Golden Plover (Alexander-Marrack in prep.), which has also been recorded in Sierra Leone (Field 1974) and Ghana (Macdonald 1978).

2. Greater Sand Plover Charadrius leschenaultii

A single Greater Sand Plover was observed, on 5 Feb 1988, in a large concentration of Palaearctic waders and African gulls, at the mouth of the Moka, a little mangrove creek, where a sandbank several tens of metres long, never immersed, shelters at high tide important populations of herons, gulls and waders from the Mondah Bay, on the Gabon northern coast.

Before the high tide covered the area, the bird was feeding on a nearby mudflat, with Common Sandpiper Tringa hypoleucos and Curlew Sandpiper, which allowed the immediate comparison of the height and size of the plover. It was afterwards observed among a large group of Ringed Plover Charadrius hiaticula and White-fronted Sand-Plover Charadrius marginatus resting on the sandbank.

It matched the description of the adult in winter plumage given by Hayman et al. (1986): the grey-brown upperparts did not show any darker area; the very white forehead, the large grey-brown patches on the sides of the breast; the heavy black bill, long and thick at the extremity, gave the head a very characteristic profile, emphasised by the grey line which joins the bill to the eye. The bird stood with an horizontal posture.

There are very few records from central Africa and the Atlantic coast: it was only noted as erratic near Lake Chad, on Nigerian territory (Elgood 1982); it is vagrant in Namibia and the south-western Cape (Urban et al. 1986) and there is one record from Senegal (Condamin 1987).

3. Kentish Plover Charadrius alexandrinus

The Kentish Plover disperses in winter on the W African coast, reaching S Cameroon (Wouri estuary) where it has been collected. The 4°N parallel represented till now the southern limit of its distribution on the Atlantic coast (Germain et al. 1973, Cramp and Simmons 1982). The easy confusion with certain plumages of White-fronted Sand-Plover has cast doubt on reports of its presence farther south, in particular in Gabon and Congo (Urban et al. 1986). However, on 2 Apr 1983 I photographed an adult male Kentish Plover at Owendo, confirming the presence of this species on the Gabonese coast. The bird stood on the mudflats, with Ringed and White-fronted Sand-Plovers and Curlew Sandpipers.

4. Broad-billed Sandpiper Limicola falcinellus

In sub-Saharan Africa, the Broad-billed Sandpiper is known to winter in small numbers in Kenya, Ethiopia, South Africa and Namibia (Urban et al. 1986). Records in W and central Africa are much less common: Bouet (1955) pointed out that the British Museum (Natural History) held a skin from Senegal; a single bird was observed at Malamfatori, SW of Lake Chad in Nigeria, in August 1968 (Elgood 1982), followed by the record of Newby (1979) in September, at Arada, central Chad. It has also been noted as rare on the lakes of the inundation zone of the Niger River in Mali, in December-January (Lamarche 1980).

I observed a single individual at Owendo from 27 Mar to 3 Apr 1983 on an artificial mudflat, regularly frequented as a resting place by many Palaeartic waders which spread at low tide to the shores of the extensive mangroves of the estuary. The bird was with a group of Ringed Plover, Little Stints and Curlew Sandpipers, common visitors to the Gabon estuary from September to May, and it accompanied them to the foraging sites.

5. Red-throated Pipit Anthus cervinus

The Red-throated Pipit was observed near Owendo on 23 Apr 1984 in a marshy coastal savanna, where it frequented a sandy area sprinkled with lateritic pebbles, typical habitat of Square-tailed Nightjar Caprimulgus fossii, Long-legged Pipit Anthus pallidiventris, Zitting Cisticola Cisticola juncidis and Quail-finch Ortygospiza gabonensis of the Gabonese coastal zone (PC).

The other individuals were seen feeding at a pond, which was drying up, at Port-Gentil some 200 m from the beach on 13 and 15 Feb 1988, along with Yellow Wagtail Motacilla flava. One of the birds showed the boldly streaked breast; the other one, easy to identify, had the cheeks and throat washed with a pale pink (PC, PAM). Another group of three birds was present on the same site on 2 Apr 1989 (PAM, DS, PB).

These are the first Gabonese data concerning this Palaearctic pipit. Elsewhere in W Africa the Red-throated Pipit is often limited to coastal meadows with short grasses or to the low vegetation of inland lakes and marshy shores and occurs as a scarce but regular migrant from Gambia to Nigeria, where it is a common winter visitor in the north of the country (Gore 1981, Elgood 1982). Only in East Africa has this species been noted so far south (Curry-Lindahl 1981).

6. Lesser Grey Shrike Lanius minor

The Lesser Grey Shrike has previously been recorded from Cameroon (Louette 1981) and from Congo in October 1942 (Malbrant & Maclatchy 1949). An immature bird was photographed near a pig farm in the Cap Lopez area, where it stayed from 17 Jan to 19 Mar 1988 (PAM, PC, GC). Other individuals were seen there and further north along the peninsula on 23 Oct and 1-5 Nov 1988 (PAM, PB); 12 Nov 1988 (PAM, DS - an adult in non-breeding plumage and a separate browner immature bird); a subadult on 14 Jan 1989 (PAM, HB). An immature bird was also seen in similar terrain behind the beach at Gamba on 29 Oct 1988 (PAM).

SUMMARY

In Gabon, one species of Palaearctic migrant, the Lesser Grey Shrike Lanius minor appears to be a rare but regular visitor. Another, the Red-throated Pipit Anthus cervinus, reaches its southern limit on the Atlantic coast in Gabon. The Kentish Plover Charadrius alexandrinus, Greater Sand-Plover C. leschenaultii and Broad-billed Sandpiper Limicola falcinellus are accidental. The Golden Plovers rarely recorded in central Africa are of the eastern species Pluvialis fulva.

RÉSUMÉ

Au Gabon, une espèce de migrateur paléarctique, Pie-grièche à poitrine rose Lanius minor, se révèle un migrateur régulier, mais rare. Un autre, le Pipit à gorge rousse Anthus cervinus trouve au Gabon la limite de sa distribution sur la côte atlantique. Le Pluvier à collier interrompu Charadrius alexandrinus, le Pluvier de Leschenault, Charadrius leschenaultii et le Bécasseau falcinelle Limicola falcinellus sont des visiteurs accidentels. Le pluvier doré rencontré comme migrateur rare en Afrique centrale s'agit du Pluvier fauve du Pacifique Pluvialis fulva.

REFERENCES

- BOUET, G. (1955) Oiseaux de l'Afrique Tropicale. ORSTOM, Paris.
- BROSSET, A. & ERARD, C. (1977) New faunistic records from Gabon. Bull. Brit. Orn. Club. 97: 125-132.
- CONDAMIN, M. (1987) Le Pluvier de Leschenault (Charadrius leschenaultii), espèce nouvelle pour le Sénégal. Malimbus 9: 131-133.
- CRAMP, S. & SIMMONS, K.E.L. (eds) (1983) The Birds of the Western Palearctic, vol. 3. Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- CURRY-LINDAHL, K. (1981) Bird Migration in Africa, vol. 1. Academic Press, New York.
- ELGOOD, J.H. (1982) The Birds of Nigeria. British Ornithologists' Union, London.
- FIELD, G.D. (1974) Nearctic waders in Sierra Leone: Lesser Golden Plover and Buff-breasted Sandpiper. Bull. Brit. Orn. Club. 94: 76-78.
- FRADE, F. (1958) Aves e mamíferos das ilhas de São Tomé e do Príncipe - Notas de sistematica e de protecção à fauna. Conf. Internat. Africanistas Ocidentais 6 Sessão Lisboa vol. 4: 137-149.
- FRADE, F. & VIEIRA DOS SANTOS, J. (1977) Aves de São Tomé e Príncipe (colecção do Centro de Zoologia). Garcia de Orta, sér. Zool. 6: 3-18.
- GERMAIN, M., DRAGESCO, J., ROUX, G. & GARCIN, H. (1973) Contribution à l'ornithologie du sud-Cameroun, 1. Non-passériformes. Oiseau Rev. fr. Orn. 43: 119-182.
- GORE, M.J. (1981) The Birds of the Gambia. British Ornithologists' Union, London.
- GRIMES, L.G. (1987) The Birds of Ghana. British Ornithologists' Union, London.
- HAYMAN, P., MARCHANT, J. & PRATER, A.J. (1986) Shorebirds. Christopher Helm, London.
- LAMARCHE, B. (1980) Liste commentée des oiseaux du Mali. Malimbus 2: 121-158.
- LOUETTE, M. (1981) The Birds of Cameroon. An annotated checklist. Verh. Kon. Acad. Wetensch. Lett. Schone Kunst. Belg. 43: 1-163.
- MACDONALD, M.A. (1978) Lesser Golden Plover in Ghana. Bull. Niger. Orn. Soc. 14: 47-48.
- MALBRANT, R. & MACLATCHY, A. (1949) Faune de l'Equateur Africain Français Tome 1: Oiseaux. Lechevalier, Paris.

- NEWBY, J.E. (1979) The Birds of the Ouadi Rimé - Ouadi Achim Faunal Reserve. A contribution to the study of the Chadian avifauna. Malimbus 1: 90-109.
- RAND, A.L., FRIEDMANN, H. & TRAYLOR, M.A. (1959) Birds from Gabon and Moyen-Congo. Fieldiana, Zool. 41(2): 219-412.
- URBAN, E.K., FRY, C.H. & KEITH, S. (1986) The Birds of Africa, vol. 2. Academic Press, London.

Patrice Christy,
BP 2240, Libreville, Gabon.