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## Short Notes — Notes Courtes

### **Black-and-White Mannikin *Lonchura bicolor*, new for Comoé National Park, Ivory Coast**

A recently-published list of the birds of Comoé National Park, Ivory Coast, comprises 494 species. An additional species for the park, Black-and-White Mannikin *Lonchura bicolor*, was mist-netted and photographed on 28 Sep 2000, in an isolated, 4-ha forest block surrounded by bush and tree savanna, at c. 8°45'N. On 11 Oct 2000, two individuals were observed at the same site. Thiollay (1985) reports the species only south of 8°N.

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### **The Yellow-billed Duck *Anas undulata* in West Africa**

The Yellow-billed Duck *Anas undulata* is common in E and southern Africa, from Ethiopia to the Cape (Brown *et al.* 1982, Scott & Rose 1996). It is not a true migrant but, dispersing in relation to rainfall, may be nomadic within parts of its range. Ringed birds have been recovered up to 1007 km from the ringing site (Oatley & Prÿs-Jones 1986). There have been occasional records in W Africa, well outside the species' normal range (Fig. 1). Robertson (1992) suggested that these occurrences might represent a regular or breeding population. In order to increase awareness of this potentially important population, all known records are detailed below.

1. A single male captured on the Indop Plain, Bamenda Province, Cameroon, by G.M. Durrell, and exported alive to the Severn Wildfowl Trust (now Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust), Slimbridge, UK, sometime in 1949 (Anon. 1950). The exact capture location was not recorded, but was approximately 5°55'N, 10°9'E. The bird was considered to be of *A. u. rueppelli* (which occurs from Kenya northwards) or an undescribed race. See Durrell (1954) for a description of the expedition.

2. Four or five Yellow-billed Ducks observed at Lahore de la Vina (Vina River), Cameroon (7°8'N, 13°50'E: Robertson 1992) in 1951 (Monard 1951). The birds were initially considered to be Black Ducks *Anas sparsa*, but one was shot (specimen dated

29 Jun 1951). This record was given as one bird by Louette (1981) and erroneously mapped in NE Nigeria by Brown *et al.* (1982) (Robertson 1992).

3. Five photographed by Chris Pearson on the Mambilla Plateau, Nigeria (7°30' N, 11°35' E) "about 1978" (Fry 1986). This record was given as Dec 1979 by Elgood *et al.* (1994).

4. Two seen at lake near Ngaoundéré, Cameroon (7°5' N, 13°35' E), 25 Dec 1990 (Robertson 1992).

5. Dried head of one dead bird for sale at a fetish stall in Ijebu-Ode market, 100 km east of Lagos, Nigeria (6°50' N, 3°50' E), in September 1999, was unlikely to have been traded in from elsewhere (not being a special fetish species), and local informants said it was of local origin (Nikolaus 2001 and pers. comm.).

6. C. 50 seen at Dang Lake, Ngaoundere, Cameroon on (approx. 7°20' N, 13°35' E) 10 Apr 1999 ("RD" = R. Demey 1999).

Further records are required to understand fully the status of Yellow-billed Duck in Cameroon and Nigeria. The species is naturally highly dispersive, but the records (so far as is known) are from suitable breeding habitat. The Black Duck subspecies *A. s. leucostigma*, a river specialist, is resident on the Cameroon Highlands and Adamawa Plateau (Scott & Rose 1996); it too has been increasingly recorded on the Mambilla Plateau, Nigeria (Hall 1977, Elgood *et al.* 1994, Walsh 1985), suggesting increased observer coverage or that this species too is expanding its range.

We are grateful to G. Nikolaus for allowing us to include his unpublished observation, and to Alan Tye for permitting the late inclusion of missed records.

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### What was Boyd Alexander's Bioko vulture?

The recent exchange between Moore (2000) and Pérez del Val (1996, 2000) seems to have missed two key points which would, I believe, have led them to a decisive conclusion as to the identity of the supposed White-backed Vulture *Pseudogyps africanus* collected by Alexander (1903) on the island of Bioko. An important principle for such records is that they should not be admitted to regional lists unless fully proven.

The Palm-nut Vulture *Gypohierax angolensis* is common and widespread on Bioko (Pérez del Val 1996) and has been so throughout the 20th century (Amadon 1953, Basilio 1963). Most inhabitants were said to consider the brown juvenile as a different species from the pied adult (Basilio 1963). Alexander (1903), however, failed to see it, but determined a vulture specimen to be an adult female White-backed Vulture which, he said, was "locally distributed along the coast-line" and "much prized for food". This species has never since been reported on the island, nor Alexander's field notes corroborated. Yet the species should be well-known if these statements are correct, and could never, *pace* Moore (2000), be considered a "vagrant".

More telling is that White-backed Vultures have not been recorded as flying across water anywhere in Africa, and Bioko is 32 km from the mainland. Their manner of flight may simply not permit them to reach the island.

It seems clear that Alexander made an error in identification. Alexander (1900) similarly saw 100 supposed Egyptian Vultures *Neophron percnopterus* "on migration ... at great altitude" at the Zambezi River. I and others are sure these were White