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Short Notes — Notes Courtes

First records of Scarce Swift *Schoutedenapus myoptilus* and Grass Owl *Tyto capensis* from Mt Cameroon

When we found Scarce Swifts *Schoutedenapus myoptilus* for the first time on the West African mainland, on the edge of Manenguba Crater in 1999, we suggested that the species might also occur on Mt Cameroon and elsewhere, having apparently been confused at times with Bates's Swift *Apus batesi* (Dowsett & Dowsett-Lemaire 2000). Scarce Swifts are readily located from their distinctive calls: a good tape-recording is presented by Gibbon (1991), the same again by Chappuis (2000), and a sonogram was published by Dowsett & Dowsett-Lemaire (1978). We were able to visit the southern slopes of Mt Cameroon in March 2001, and found Scarce Swifts to be common there. We saw and heard them daily from 4–13 March (except for 5 March, after a storm). They were especially numerous in the area of Mann's Spring (4°7'N, 9°8'E) from 2000 to 2500 m, but we noted them down to 900 m at Mapanja (4°5'N, 9°10'E) and at Spider Camp (4°7'N, 9°9'E) at 1600 m, where one was tape-recorded. The Swifts were most conspicuous from dawn to mid-morning and from mid- or late afternoon to dusk, usually in pairs or small groups, calling when chasing each other (which they do frequently). Their absence at midday suggests they are not breeding at this time of year; moreover, no aerial matings were seen. Scarce Swifts should be expected to occur over some other montane forests of Cameroon, although they are apparently absent from Mt Kupe and the Bakossi Mts — we did not find any in 15 weeks of field work, at different seasons, over a period of four years. They have been known from nearby Bioko for nearly a century (Pérez del Val 1996); the paucity of records there may just reflect a lack of fieldwork by observers familiar with this Afromontane species. The Swifts could easily cross between Mt Cameroon and the island. They are known to be migratory (breeding visitors) in at least Malawi (Dowsett-Lemaire 1989) and Zimbabwe (Brooke *in* Harrison *et al.* 1997).

While camped at Mann's Spring we heard the call of a Grass Owl *Tyto capensis* on two separate evenings, each time just at the edge of the forest (at 2300 m), with extensive grassland on one side, and much bracken brier in the open montane forest that spreads below the grassland. The voice can be separated from that of Barn Owl *T. alba* by its being a single screech, quieter and never repeated in a series, with lower pitch, shorter duration and lack of tremolo. A recording is presented by Gibbon (1991) and the same again by Chappuis (2000). Mt Cameroon is the western limit of Grass Owl. It appears to be common in Manenguba Crater (Serle 1950, pers. obs.) and specimens are also known from Lake Paponoun (or Monoun) (Germain *et al.* 1973), some 100 km north-east of Manenguba. Moreover, Serle (1950) probably saw this owl at Bambulue, and there is a possible sight record from Mbi Crater (Dowsett-

Lemaire & Dowsett 1998). There are specimens of Barn Owl from Mt Cameroon (Reichenow 1911, under *Strix maculata*), but a sight record from grassland at 2500 m, attributed to Barn Owl by Eisentraut (1973), might perhaps have been a Grass Owl.

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