



**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.



Brown Nightjar - Caprimulgus binotatus (Photo: R Carroll)

FIRST SIGHT RECORD OF THE BLACK-HEADED GULL FOR CAMEROON, WEST AFRICA -

On 19 December 1985 two Black-headed Gulls (Larus ridibundus) were observed along the Nyong River at Akonolinga, Cameroon (3°40'N, 12°15'E). A first-winter bird and an adult were observed for an hour (12.00-13.00 hours) using 9X binoculars at a distance of 75m. The birds swam on small temporary pools created by the receding river. These birds were seen again on 20 December (13.30-15.00 hours) at the same location. The first-winter bird was observed through a 15- 60X zoom spotting telescope as it foraged at distances as close as 50 m. At 15.00 hours the adult reappeared circling overhead. The first-winter bird began giving a high-pitched "begging" call and shortly thereafter flew up to join the adult. Both circled over the marsh several times before flying out of sight downstream.

The following description was made at the time of the observations:

Adult: Roughly the size and appearance of a Bonaparte's Gull (L. philadelphia), a species with which I am familiar from western North America. Bill slender, reddish and about the same length as the head. Head white with a dark ear spot. Throat, nape, underparts and tail white. Mantle and upper portions of inner wing light grey. Outer wing with extensive white leading edge bordered by black primary feather tips.

First-winter bird: Same size as adult. Bill slender, reddish-orange on basal two-thirds and dark on the tip. Head white with faint grey on crown and a dark ear spot. Underparts, throat and nape white. Tail white with a wide subterminal black band. Mantle and upper portion of inner wing light grey. Lesser and median wing coverts (carpal bar) brown. Outer wing with extensive white leading edge bordered by brown primary feather tips. Feet orange-red.

This record represents the first occurrence of the Black-headed Gull for Cameroon (see Louette 1981) and is the southern-most record for West Africa. This species ranges south along the African coasts to Tanzania and Gambia during the non-breeding season (Cramp and Simmons 1983). The only coastal records south of Gambia are three sightings by Thiollay (1985) at Abidjan, Ivory Coast, and six sightings by Wallace (1973) at Lagos, Nigeria. Black-headed Gulls may be more common inland, as Lamarche (1980) states that they are common winter visitors along the Niger river in Mali. Additionally, Hopson (1964), Elgood et al. (1966), and Walsh (1968) have sighted several at Lake Chad, Nigeria.

Elgood et al. (1966) suggested that a trans-Saharan flight may account for the gulls that reach Lake Chad and other inland locations in West Africa. I suspect that the Akonolinga birds arrived by flying upriver, however, because this location is only about 300 km from the coast. As the breeding population of the Black-headed Gull continues to expand in Europe, more sightings can be expected in West Africa in the future.

This work was supported through grants from the National Geographic Society and National Science Foundation, USA, to T.B. Smith, University of California, Berkeley.

REFERENCES

- CRAMP, S. & K.E.L. SIMMONS (eds) (1983) The Birds of the Western Palearctic. Vol. 3. O.U.P. Oxford
- ELGOOD, J.H., R.E. SHARLAND, & P. WARD. (1966) Palearctic migrants in Nigeria. Ibis 108: 84-116.
- HOPSON, A.J. (1964) Preliminary notes on the birds of Malamfatori, Lake Chad. Bull. Niger. Orn. Soc. 1: 7-14
- LAMARCHE, G. (1981) Liste commentée des oiseaux du Mali Malimbus 2: 121-158
- LOUETTE, M. (1981) The birds of Cameroon: an annotated checklist. Verh Kooninklijk. Acad. Wetensch Lett. Schone Kunsten van België 43, No. 163.
- THIOLLAY, J. (1985) The birds of the Ivory Coast: status and distribution. Malimbus 7: 1-58
- WALLACE, D.I.M. (1973) Seabirds at Lagos and in the Gulf of Guinea. Ibis 115: 559-571.
- WALSH, F. (1968) Inland records of gulls. Bull. Niger. Orn. Soc. 5: 65-66

Christopher W. Swarth, Department of Biological Science, Diablo Valley College, Pleasant Hill, California, 94523, USA.

(Present address: Department of Biological Science, Prince George's Community College, Largo, Maryland, 20772, USA)