



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



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The Gull-billed and White-winged Black Terns seemed to be associating closely together in three or four flocks. The Whiskered Terns were generally separate in three groups of 18, 8 and 6. Another four were with a dozen White-winged Black Terns and three Gull-billed Terns. The size difference between White-winged and Whiskered Terns, though small, was quite obvious even at a distance. The lack of a white "collar" in the Whiskered Terns was also very noticeable.

During a previous visit on 24th April I had counted 165 White-winged Black Terns in 10 parties and about 15 Gull-billed Terns. Some of both species were in breeding dress, There were no terns on a visit on 21st February.

I again visited the area on 21st August, By that time only one small sandbank above Sakace remained uncovered. This was occupied by 63 Skimmers and about 20 Grey Pratincoles Galachrysis cinerea but no terns. However, at about 10.30 hours local time, just below Sakace rapids, a Caspian Tern Hydroprogne caspia was seen flying strongly downstream (nearly due south) at a height of about 100 feet. It had a complete black cap of the breeding plumage and was quite unmistakable owing to its impressive size and wing span, massive red beak, and primaries showing very black on the under-surface. No other terns were seen on this trip.

All three species seen in July have also been recorded at Lake Chad in that month (Hopson. 1964, BNOS 1(4):13; Dowsett 1968, BNOS 5(19):62 & 1969, 6(22):41.) but the numbers of Whiskered Terns above Yelwa seems to be without precedent. It is just possible that these birds had summered in the area or were exceptionally early Palaearctic migrants (Common Sandpipers Aotitis hypoleucos were already arriving). It seems as probable that they had travelled from the inundation zone in time with the rising flood waters.

The Caspian Tern was presumably a straight forward trans-Saharan migrant. It is of great interest in adding a further inland locality for Nigeria. Moreau (1967, Ibis 109: 247) gave an interesting discussion of the migration of this species into West Africa and clearly indicated that it must be greatly under-recorded in Northern Nigeria.

Frank Walsh.

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#### VILLAGE WEAVERS CAUSING SEVERE DAMAGE TO MAIZE.

While travelling in Borgu and adjacent parts of Niger Province I have often noticed bird-scaring devices, sometimes of a quite elaborate nature. However, although large numbers of Canarys Serinus mozambicus are sometimes present on millet Pennisetum typhoideum heads, I had never seen any serious bird damage until 19th July 1969. On that date, by the River Kontagora near Kainji Dam, I saw badly damaged Maize Zea mays, and was able to watch Village Weavers Ploceus cucullatus ripping open the almost mature cobs. Grey-headed Sparrows Passer griseus were also present but confined their attentions to those cobs which had already

been extensively damaged by the weavers. The planting was a Maize/Cotton Gossypium sp. mix, the rows of maize being  $3\frac{1}{2}$  feet apart interspersed with cotton, and 3 feet apart along the rows. Freshly killed trees emerged from the crop area and in these about 30 weavers nests were scattered.

A quick assesment of damage was made by scoring the cobs along several short rows as shown below. No attemp was made to pick a particularly bad patch.

% Damage per Cob	No. of Cobs	% of Cobs
0	101	55
1 - 25	17	9.2
26 - 50	16	8.6
51 - 75	18	9.7
76 - 99	11	5.9
100	21	11.3
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The actual damage was probably somewhat worse than these figures suggest as among the undamaged cobs were many which had not developed sufficiently to attract the attentions of the weavers. Further, the farmer did not harvest the remnants of his crop until about the 25th July. leaving the underdeveloped plants to continue growing and doubtless to suffer the attentions of the weavers.

Judging by the precautions often taken by farmers such damage is reasonably common. Nevertheless apart from the depredations of Black-tailed Godwit Limosa limosa on newly planted rice Oryza sativa paddy (Roux, 1959, Terre et Vie 106 :315-321) and the notorious activities of the Red-billed Quelea Quelea quelea little seems to have been recorded of the economic importance of birds in West Africa.

Frank Walsh.

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BREEDING BIOLOGY OF THE OLIVACEOUS

WARBLER Hippolias pallida laononi.

Observations were made of a nest of the Olivaceous Warbler Hippolias pallida laononi at Malam'fatori ( $13^{\circ}37'N.$ ,  $13^{\circ}20'E.$ ) on the Nigerian shore of Lake Chad. The nest was about 6 feet up in a small neem tree at the porch of my house. It was usually examined twice daily, at about 10.00 and 16.00 hours. I am grateful to Malam Ali Kaganmi for keeping records during my absence.

The first egg was laid about 48 hours after the nest was complete, on 2nd June 1968. The second egg, which completed the clutch, was laid about 24 hours after the first, on 3rd June. The fresh egg weighed 1.50 grms., or 16% of the average body weight of an adult at Malam'fatori.