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Short Notes

Seconde observation d'un Huitrier pie *Haematopus ostralegus* au Zaïre

L'arrière-saison de 1957 était à tout point remarquable en ce qui concerne le passage inaccoutumé de limicoles paléarctiques. Le 1 novembre, j'avais noté à Coquilhatville (actuellement Mbandaka, 0°4'N, 18°16'E), sur un remblai de sable parsemé de flaques d'eau, quelques Bécassines doubles *Gallinago media*, des Chevaliers sylvains *Tringa glareola*, un Chevalier culblanc *T. ochropus*, deux Chevaliers stagnatiles *T. stagnatilis*, un Grand Gravelot *Charadrius hiaticula* et une Echasse blanche *Himantopus himantopus* (Herroelen 1958). Le lendemain, je retournai à cet endroit intéressant et j'y observai à mon étonnement deux Huitriers pies *Haematopus ostralegus*. J'aurais bien voulu en récolter un spécimen mais le terrain qu'ils fréquentaient était situé trop près de l'agglomération.

Le Huitrier pie est un échassier côtier rarement vu à l'intérieur des terres en Afrique centrale. Chapin (1939) a récolté une femelle (de la sous-espèce *longipes*; Vaurie 1965) à Avakubi (1°24'N, 27°40'E) le 3 octobre 1913; jusqu'à présent, c'est la seule pièce à conviction pour le Zaïre. La présence de l'espèce près de l'Equateur constitue l'observation la plus occidentale en Afrique centrale; Mbandaka se trouve notamment à 1050 km au Sud-ouest d'Avakubi. Précédemment l'Huitrier pie était connu de sept pays de l'Afrique de l'Est (Dowsett 1980).

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Reçu 18 juillet 1992

Revu 18 décembre 1992

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White-backed Night Heron *Nycticorax leuconotus* in Sierra Leone

On 17 June 1992, my son, Moray Iles and myself were birdwatching along the coastal road which runs south from Freetown, Sierra Leone, west of the Peninsula Mountains. Returning from a dugout punt trip along the No. 2 River which enters the sea between

Sussex and York, our attention was drawn to two small herons a few yards into the mangroves. After reversing the boat, we were able to identify two White-backed Night Herons *Nycticorax leuconotus*, one of which was photographed. The birds kept close together and quickly climbed amongst the lower mangrove roots, only a little disturbed by our presence. The mid-afternoon light provided clear views. They appeared slightly bigger than Green-backed Heron *Butorides striatus*, seen some minutes before, but gave the impression of being slender and long-legged. The crown, nape and lores were dull black; the eyes were large and liquid black surrounded by a white eye-ring. Below the whitish chin, the neck, chest and belly were dark rust, the back and wings dark grey. We did not detect any white on the back, possibly because the birds neither flew nor moved their wings. After some minutes they moved further into the mangrove.

We can trace no published records of this species in Sierra Leone but G.D. Field (pers. comm.) refers to a specimen being collected in 1952 in Songo Creek near the Peninsula and to unpublished sight records for the Little Scarcies River and from Kono. This sighting would therefore appear to be unusual.

Received 19 October 1992

Revised 23 February 1993

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Breeding of Slender-billed Bulbul *Andropadus gracilirostris* in Sierra Leone

As Keith *et al.* (1992) state that the nest and eggs of the Slender-billed Bulbul *Andropadus gracilirostris* are undescribed, a note of my observations in Sierra Leone may be worth-while.

Although basically a forest canopy species, the Slender-billed Bulbul is much less dependent on forest than most of the genus and in the 1970s used regularly to breed in my garden at Fourah Bay College on the outskirts of Freetown. My house was near the edge of the college housing area, with plenty of rather scrubby secondary forest or "bush" within easy flying distance. The garden consisted of open grass and a number of trees and shrubs, particularly *Anisophyllea laurina* and *Dialium guineense*, left when the ground was originally cleared for housing because of their edible fruits. The *Dialium* trees (and others) were frequently infested with hairy caterpillars, attracting Didric Cuckoos *Chrysococcyx caprius* and the Slender-billed Buleuls, which were therefore regularly in the garden and I could expect to see or hear them there most days of the year.

In four separate years a pair built in one of these *Dialium* trees, in another year they chose a *Rauvolfia vomitaria* close to the house, and in another a tall, straggly hedge of the exotic *Tecoma stans*, none of which trees was higher than 6-7 m.

Nests were built almost entirely by one individual, presumably the female; another bird, presumably the male, accompanied each visit, normally without assisting in building, although very occasionally he too would bring material. The latter bird also