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## Bird records from Liberia

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### Summary

Based on observations from 1988 to 1990, a record is presented of birds considered by Gatter (1988) to be uncommon or rare, including three species new for the country, *Passer domesticus*, *Lamprotornis caudatus* and *Ptilostomus afer*. Also presented are several records of species of which there are very few records from Liberia and new breeding records. Deforestation further north may be enabling birds from the Guinea savanna zone to reach Liberia. A movement of African species was noted down the coast in September - October.

### Résumé

L'auteur, sur la base d'observations de 1988 à 1990, présente ses données sur les oiseaux considérés par Gatter (1988) comme peu communs ou rares, y compris trois espèces nouvelles pour le pays, *Passer domesticus*, *Lamprotornis caudatus* et *Ptilostomus afer*. Sont également rapportées quelques observations d'espèces rarement signalées au Libéria et de nouvelles données sur la reproduction. Il est possible que le déboisement plus au nord permette aux oiseaux de la savanne guinéenne d'atteindre le Libéria. Des espèces africaines descendant le long de la côte ont été notées en septembre - octobre.

### Introduction

I was resident in Liberia from February 1988 until I was evacuated by helicopter, at the height of the civil war, in August 1990. During this period I studied birds daily in and around Monrovia. I also travelled extensively throughout the country; I regularly visited Lake Piso and Robertsport (in Mar 1988 with W. Gatter and G. Hodgson) and the Firestone Estate on the coast, visited Yekepa and Nimba Mountain in the north-

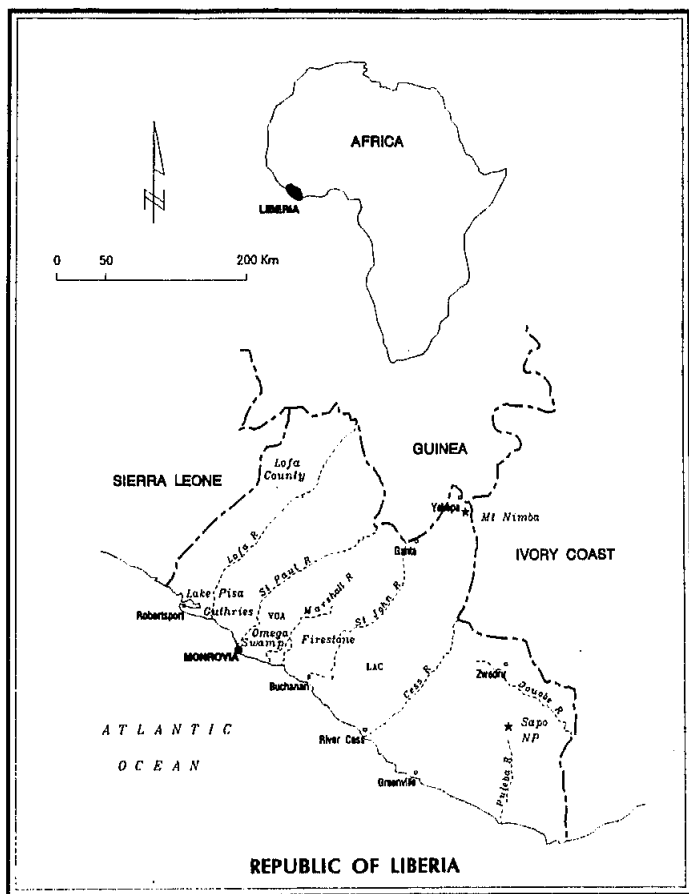


Figure 1. Map of Liberia, showing localities mentioned in the text.

east of the country on five occasions, in March, June and November 1988, November 1989 and February 1990, travelled to Sapo National Park in River Cess County in November 1988 in company with Kevin and Christine Carlson and made an extensive tour of the remaining rain forest in Lofa County in company with Wulf Gatter in March 1989. Observers are identified by their initials. All locations mentioned are given in Figure 1.

I have used Gatter (1988) as a basis for this paper, recording only species which he considered to be uncommon or rare, confirming his view of the status where there was any doubt and commenting where my observations suggest a different status or where I saw a species in regions outside what he considered to be their normal range. Three new species are added to the Liberian list, one of which he included in his paper. There are few breeding records from Liberia and I have included all evidence of breeding, even of the most common species. I have also included records of species which appear to be declining in numbers.

At the time of writing Liberia is still in turmoil, the country divided under the control of three warring factions. After four years of civil war there are few signs of a political solution and little likelihood that the country can return to a semblance of normality in the near future. Uncontrolled logging is being carried out as the only source of foreign exchange available to the main rebel faction, which controls most of the area which until recently was still under primary forest. And starving villagers have eaten every wild creature they have been able to trap or shoot. Deforestation to the north and east of Liberia has decimated the forest in Sierra Leone and much of Guinea as well as further up the West African coast. Two of the new records and one previously unconfirmed relate to species which normally occur in the Sudan or Guinea savanna zones. I believe that the opening of the forest has enabled these birds to move down the coast through open country; more such records are likely to occur in the future. I noted a similar phenomenon in The Gambia. Between 1981 and 1991 a number of species formerly confined to the Sudan zone had appeared in The Gambia in increasing numbers as the desert moved inexorably southwards (Gore 1981, 1991).

Finally, I have commented on an apparent movement of African species southwards (in fact westwards along the coast in Liberia), from late August to early October, which I noted on two consecutive years and which has not previously been reported. Most obvious were the flocks of Green Pigeon *Treron calva* but several other species were observed only at this time of the year which suggests such a movement.

### Species list

For ease of reference I have followed the same order as Gatter (1988). The status abbreviations given in parentheses at the end of each of the species notes are those used for that species by Gatter (1988) as follows:

RB	resident breeder
R(B)	resident, but breeding unproven
(RB)	resident and breeding status unproven; species may leave during the rains
PM	Palaearctic migrant
NM	Nearctic or Neotropical migrant
AfM	migrates within Liberia and neighbouring areas
AfM/B	migrates to and from Liberia to breed in Liberia
AfM/NB	migrates to and from Liberia to spend the non-breeding season in Liberia
V	vagrant
?	indicates doubt about the status immediately preceding the question mark, but not of occurrence
a	abundant
c	common
u	uncommon
r	rare
u-c	means the species is not uncommon, or is locally uncommon and locally common
uScN	uncommon in south, common in north etc.
(*)	all possible further information needed.

**Dabchick *Podiceps ruficollis*.** Seen only on a small lake at Liberia Agriculture Company estate (LAC) where 2-3 were present Jun and Nov 1988. (RB, AfM, u)

**Cory's Shearwater *Calonectris diomedea*.** Seen commonly, up to 12 (once 20) often in view at a time, 15-35 km off Monrovia, Dec-Mar 1988-90. (PM, u)

**Leach's Petrel *Oceanodroma leucorhoa*.** One c. 16 km off Marshall River, 14 Feb 1988. (PM, r (\*))

**Storm Petrel *Hydrobates pelagicus*.** Few records on regular offshore boat trips; c. 6 14 Feb 1988; 2-3 on several occasions, Dec-Mar 1988-90. (PM, u)

**Darter *Anhinga rufa*.** Only record: a single near Yekepa, Mar 1988. (AfM/NB, u)

**Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus*.** Four singles seen separately in swamps in Monrovia suburbs, 12 Sep 1988. The birds must have been migrants either Palaearctic or intra-African as the swamps were in densely populated areas and the birds could not have survived persecution for any length of time. (RB, AfM?, PM, u (\*))

**Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax*.** Regularly seen for most of the year (no records Jun-Aug) along St Paul's River, (max. 30, adults and immatures, 12 Feb 1989) but no breeding colony located. (PM, AfM/B?, u)

**Tiger Bittern *Tigriornis leucocephala*.** A juvenile recovered from a boy at the Firestone Rubber Plantation and subsequently released Nov 1988; he said he had taken it from a nest in mangrove bordering the Marshall River. (RB, u)

**Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*.** Singles seen on numerous occasions at Omega swamp throughout the year (except Jun-Aug when area not visited) but no evidence

of breeding; one at Zwedru, Mar 1988. (PM, AfM/NB?, u)

**Black-headed Heron** *Ardea melanocephala*. Flocks of 6-10 regularly seen at dusk flying down the St Paul's River, Dec-Feb 1988-90; max. 24, early Jan 1989. (AfM/NB u)

**Hadada** *Bostrychia hagedash*. Only record: a pair in forest along the Sinoe River bordering Sapo National Park, Nov 1988. (R(B), AfM u-c)

**African Spoonbill** *Platalea alba*. Single circling over St Paul's River, Nov 1988. (AfM, u)

**White-faced Tree Duck** *Dendrocygna viduata*. Seen in parties of 2-8, infrequently but throughout the year, at Omega swamp and once, a pair, at Lake Piso, 27 Nov 1988. (RB, AfM, u)

**Pygmy Goose** *Nettapus auritus*. Small numbers seen regularly throughout the year, and apparently resident, on a complex of small lakes near the Voice of America station (VOA) but no young seen; c. 15 at LAC, 2 Jun 1988. (R(B), u).

**Spur-winged Goose** *Plectropterus gambensis*. One in a swamp at LAC, 2 Jun 1988. (RB, AfM, r)

**Hartlaub's Duck** *Pteronetta hartlaubii*. Two at Yekepa, Nov 1988 (with K&CC) and four at Lofa (with WG), Mar 1989, on both occasions flying over forest. (RB, u)

**Osprey** *Pandion haliaetus*. Fairly common winter visitor on the coast. (PM, u)

**Palmnut Vulture** *Gypohierax angolensis*. No longer common; now a scarce resident, having been shot for "fun" by hunters. One or two (both adults and juveniles) seen regularly, but not invariably, near the coast on both the Marshall and Lofa Rivers and several inland at Lofa (with WG), Mar 1989. (RB, AfM, c)

**Black Sparrowhawk** *Accipiter melanoleucus*. Singles seen on three occasions in forest adjoining the St Paul's River. (R(B), u)

**Red-tailed Buzzard** *Buteo auguralis*. Not common; only one record, two near Zwedru, Nov 1988. (AfM/B, c)

**Cassin's Hawk-eagle** *Spizaetus africanus*. Regularly seen throughout the year in vicinity of VOA. (Listed by Gatter (1988) as *Hieraaetus africanus*. RB, u)

**Ayres Hawk-eagle** *Hieraaetus dubius*. Two records: singles over forest at Yekepa, March 1988 and Robertsport, 30 Oct 1988. (R(B), r(\*))

**Crowned Eagle** *Stephanoaetus coronatus*. Two sightings: single near Firestone Rubber Estate, Jun 1988; pair at Lofa, Mar 1989. (RB, u)

**Black-shouldered Kite** *Elanus caeruleus*. Seen only at Yekepa where I recorded 1-2 on every visit, Feb, Mar, Jun and Nov. (R?, AfM, u)

**Honey Buzzard** *Pernis ptilorhynchus*. Not a common migrant; seen only once, near Robertsport, Feb 1988. (PM, c)

**Hobby** *Falco subbuteo*. Singles at Yekepa, 5 Nov 1988 and over Mamba Point, Monrovia, Feb 1990. (PM, u)

**Blue Quail** *Coturnix chinensis*. Recorded only once: a covey of c. 10 in open grassland near Lake Piso (with WG and GH), Mar 1988. (R?)B, AfM, u)

**Ahanta Francolin** *Francolinus achantensis*. Pair with chicks near Zwedru, 5 Apr

1988. (RB,c)

**Button Quail** *Turnix sylvatica*. Two or three in open grassland near Lake Piso (with WG and GH), Mar 1988. (AfM/B, r (\*))

**Lesser Moorhen** *Gallinula angulata*. Only record: one at LAC, 2 Jun 1988. (RB ?, AfM, R (\*))

**Allen's Gallinule** *Porphyrio alleni*. Only record: one at LAC, 2 Jun 1988. (RB?, AfM, u)

**African Jacana** *Actophilornis africana*. No longer common anywhere near the coast or inhabited areas, undoubtedly due to shooting. I saw only one, on a swamp near Ganta, Apr 1988. (RB, AfM?, c)

**Black-winged Stilt** *Himantopus himantopus*. Single on swamp on outskirts of Monrovia, Nov 1988. (AfM/PM?, u(\*))

**Senegal Thick-Knee** *Burhinus senegalensis*. Two at VOA, Feb 1989. (AfM, r(\*))

**Water Thick-knee** *Burhinus vermiculatus*. Apparently resident on sandy beaches bordering the estuaries; seen throughout the year on the Marshall and Lofa Rivers. No breeding records. (RB, AfM?, u-c)

**Common Pratincole** *Glareola pratincola*. Pairs behaving as if breeding near Lake Piso, Mar 1988 and Omega swamp, May 1989. (AfM/B, u)

**Forbes's Banded Plover** *Charadrius forbesii*. Two records: a flock of five at LAC, 24 Nov 1988 and c. 10 at Guthries Plantation, Mar 1990, both groups presumably African migrants as I visited both areas at different times during the year and did not encounter them. (RB?, AfM, c)

**Spur-winged Plover** *Vanellus spinosus*. One on a sand spit in Monrovia Port, 26 Dec 1988 to early Mar 1989. (V, r (\*))



Spur-winged Plover - Vanneau éperonné - *Vanellus spinosus*

Photo: Michael Gore

- Bar-tailed Godwit** *Limosa lapponica*. Two flying off Mamba Point, Monrovia, 11 Oct 1988. (PM, r(\*))
- Curlew** *Numenius arquata*. Only sighting: one off Mamba Point, Sep 1988. I saw none on the mudflats adjoining the main rivers. (PM, u(\*))
- Marsh Sandpiper** *Tringa stagnatilis*. Two in estuary of Marshall River, 28 Oct 1988. (PM, r-u(\*))
- Turnstone** *Arenaria interpres*. Small parties, up to c. 15, seen at entrance to Marshall River, Mar and Oct 1988, and at St Paul's River, Sep 1988. (PM, u)
- Grey Phalarope** *Phalaropus fulicarius*. One bird and subsequently three together c. 30 km off Monrovia on two separate occasions in Feb 1990. (PM, r(\*))
- Little Stint** *Calidris minuta*. Small numbers seen regularly among other waders in estuary of Marshall River, Feb-Mar 1988 and 1989 and Nov 1988. (PM, u)
- Long-tailed Skua** *Stercorarius longicaudus*. One positively identified, 24 km off Monrovia, Mar 1990. (PM, r (\*))
- Pomarine Skua** *Stercorarius pomarinus*. Common (sometimes up to ten in view simultaneously) 10-40 km off Monrovia on numerous occasions Dec-Mar 1988-89 and 1989-90. (PM,u(\*))
- Lesser Black-backed Gull** *Larus fuscus*. Once; a single off Mamba Point, Monrovia, 17 Nov 1988. (PM, u)
- Sabine's Gull** *Larus sabini*. Three watched flying west of Mamba Point, 11 Aug 1989 (an early date, cf. Brown *et al.* 1982); parties of 3-6 seen c. 50 km off Monrovia on several occasions, Feb-Mar 1990. (PM, r (\*))
- Black-headed Gull** *Larus ridibundus*. One first-winter bird off Mamba Point, Monrovia, 1 Oct 1988. (PM, u)
- Noddy** *Anous stolidus*. Two individuals seen flying with flock of Black Terns *Sterna nigra* off Mamba Point, Monrovia on 1 Jul and 7 Aug 1989; one immature, again with *S. nigra*, there early Jun 1990. (V(\*))
- White-capped Noddy** *Anous tenuirostris*. One with flock of *Sterna nigra* off Mamba Point, Monrovia, 20 and 27 Oct 1988. (V(\*))
- Little Tern** *Sterna albifrons*. Common passage migrant on the coast; flocks of 10-20 frequently seen Feb-Mar and Sep-Oct 1988-90. (PM?/AfM?, u)
- Roseate Tern** *Sterna dougallii*. Only one flock of c. 40 positively identified, with many birds in breeding plumage, roosting on sandbank at entrance to Marshall River, 12 Mar 1988. (PM, u)
- Black Tern** *Sterna nigra*. Over-summering flocks of 100-200 birds present off Monrovia each year, Apr-Aug 1988-90. (PM, a)
- African Skimmer** *Rhynchops flavirostris*. Seen only twice: one feeding at dusk on St Paul's River, 12 Jan 1989, and an immature with a flock of *Sterna nigra* off Mamba Point, Monrovia, 8-9 Aug 1989. (RB?, AfM, u (\*))
- Green Pigeon** *Treron calva*. Common on the coast only in Aug-Sep 1988-89, when flocks were frequently observed moving eastwards. (RB, AfM, a)
- Senegal Parrot** *Poicephalus senegalensis*. Frequent seasonal visitor to British



Embassy garden in Monrovia, Nov-Mar. Max. c. 10, Mar 1990. (RB?, r, introduced? (\*))

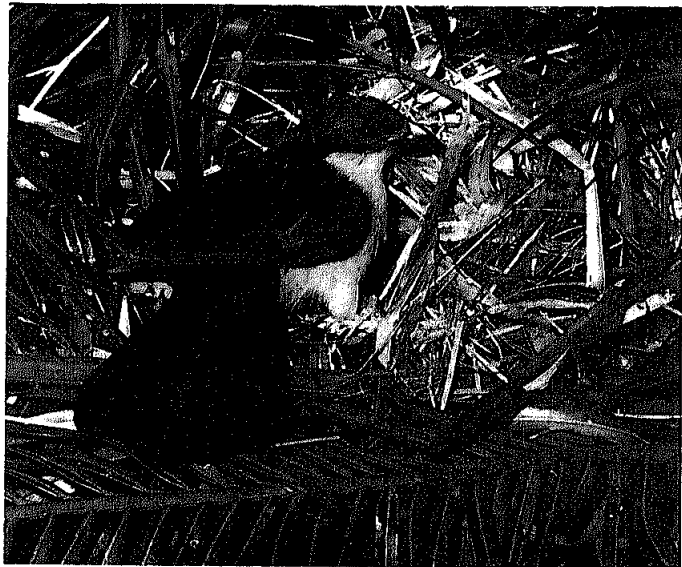
**Rose-ringed Parakeet *Psittacula krameri*.** Occasional, irregular visitor throughout the year to British Embassy garden, Monrovia, (max. flock of seven which was present on most days for four weeks in Feb-Mar 1990). (RB?, AfM, r (\*))

**Grey Parrot *Psittacus erithacus*.** Flock of seven at Sapo National Park, Nov 1988, were the only wild birds I saw. Presumed escapees seen regularly around Monrovia. (RB,c)

**Great Blue Turaco *Corythaeola cristata*.** Seen only on the periphery of Sapo National Park, Nov 1988, where common. (RB, r-c)

**Grey Plantain-eater *Crinifer piscator*.** Two near Robertsport, 7 Feb 1988; two regularly in garden by St Paul's River, Dec 1988 to Jan 1989; next seen, four in Jan 1990. As I have no records for other times of the year I believe they are migrants. (R(B), u)

**Senegal Coucal *Centropus senegalensis*.** Young in the nest, in gardens in Monrovia, Feb and Apr 1990. (R(B), c)



Senegal Coucal - Coucal du Sénégal - *Centropus senegalensis*

Photo: Michael Gore

**Standard-winged Nightjar *Macrodipteryx longipennis*.** Males in breeding plumage on outskirts of Monrovia, Feb-Mar 1989-90. (AfM/B, u-c)

**Sabine's Spinetail *Chaetura sabini*.** C. 10 over Nimba Mountain, Apr 1988; none seen on subsequent visits in Feb and Nov. Several in Lofa (with WG), Mar 1989. (RB, AfM?, u-c)

**Mottled Swift *Apus aequatorialis*.** Small group seen over forest in Lofa (with WG), Mar 1989. (V, AfM, r)

**Pallid Swift *Apus pallidus*.** One positively identified, flying with European Swifts *A. apus* over lower reaches of Lofa River, 31 Oct 1988. (PM, r (\*))

**Palm Swift *Cypsiurus parvus*.** Common wherever there are plantations of palms, in some places (I noticed them in Grand Gedah county) villagers erect artificial thatched nesting sites, from which they take the young for food. Half grown young in one such structure near Zwedru, Nov 1988. (RB, c)

**Giant Kingfisher *Ceryle maxima*.** Seen regularly along the lower reaches of all the main rivers throughout the year. (RB, AfM?, u)

**Pied Kingfisher *Ceryle rudis*.** Perhaps increasing; regularly seen along the St Paul's, Farmington and Lofa Rivers; breeding colony of 4-8 nest holes in bank near St Paul's River Bridge, active Nov 1989. (RB, AfM?, u)

**Shining-blue Kingfisher *Alcedo quadibrachys*.** Five chicks, near fledging, taken by children from nest in bank of Marshall River, 29 Oct 1988. (RB, c)

**Striped Kingfisher *Halcyon chelicuti*.** One record; single at Yekepa, Nov 1988. (AfM/NB, V (\*))



**Striped Kingfisher - Martin-chasseur strié - *Halcyon chelicuti***

**Photo: Michael Gore**

**Grey-headed Kingfisher *Halcyon leucocephala*.** Non-breeding visitor to coastal areas, Oct-Feb; 1-2 present in British Embassy garden, Monrovia, each year. (AfM/B, AfM/NB, u-c)

**White-throated Bee-eater *Merops albicollis*.** Abundant passage migrant, Mar-Apr and Oct-Dec; none seen other months. (AfM/NB, a)

**Black Bee-eater *Merops gularis*.** Total of c. 10 at Yekepa, Mar 1988; two at Zwedru, Apr 1988, none on subsequent visits in Jun and Nov; several near Lake Piso, Mar 1988; common and apparently breeding in roadside banks on edge of Gola Forest (with WG), Mar 1989. (RB, AfM/B, u-c)

**Blue-headed Bee-eater *Merops muelleri*.** Pair in clearing in primary forest in Lofa County (with WG), 8 Mar 1989. (RB, r-u (\*))

**Carmine Bee-eater *Merops nubicus*.** Five near Lake Piso, 7 Feb 1988. (AfM/NB, r)

**Little Bee-eater *Merops pusillus*.** Several pairs nesting in holes in low banks near Lake Piso, Feb and Mar 1988. (RB, AfM/B, u-c)

**Blue-cheeked Bee-eater *Merops superciliosus*.** Common in mangrove along the lower reaches of the Marshall and Lofa Rivers, Mar-Apr 1988 and 1989. Not seen at any other time. (PM?, AfM/B?, u, (\*))

**Broad-billed Roller *Eurystomus glaucurus*.** Pair entering nest hole high in a palm tree near Omega swamp, May 1988. (AfM/NB, AfM/B, a)

**Blue-throated Roller *Eurystomus gularis*.** Common on edge of forest in Lofa County (with WG), Mar 1989. (RB, AfM, u-c)

**Hoopoe *Upupa epops*.** One seen in garden near St Paul's River by R. Tillin, a reliable observer, in Nov 1989. (PM?, AfM/NB?, r)

**Buff-headed Wood-Hoopoe *Phoeniculus bollei*.** Three records: single near Zwedru, Apr 1988; a pair and a single at Yekepa, Nov 1988. (R(B), u (\*))

**Piping Hornbill *Bycanistes fistulator*.** Flocks of 6-12 regularly seen throughout the year at VOA and over the lower reaches of Lofa River. (R(B), AfM, u-c)

**Black-casqued Hornbill *Ceratogymna atrata*.** Present in small numbers in forest at Sapo National Park, Nov 1988 and at Lofa County, Mar 1989, where they were just hanging on despite deforestation and shooting. (R(B), u-c)

**Yellow-casqued Hornbill *Ceratogymna elata*.** Recorded only in primary forest in Lofa County (with WG), where a total of c. 10 was seen over a three-day period, Mar 1989. (RB, u-c)

**Red-billed Dwarf Hornbill *Tockus camurus*.** Several individuals seen (with WG) in primary forest in Lofa County, Mar 1989. (RB, u-c)

**Pied Hornbill *Tockus fasciatus*.** Male at nest hole high in a tree at Zwedru, Nov 1988. The commonest hornbill in and around Monrovia when trees were fruiting. (RB, c-a)

**Black Dwarf Hornbill *Tockus hartlaubi*.** A male feeding a female in a nest hole 30 m up in a tree in primary forest at Lofa, Mar 1989 (with WG) is the first documented breeding record. Not seen elsewhere. (R(B), r-u)

**Vieillot's Barbet *Lybius vieillotii*.** Seen once: a pair in open woodland near Lake Piso, Nov 1988. (RB, u)

**Willcocks's Honey-Guide** *Indicator willcocksii*. One in northern Lofa Cou (WG), 8 Mar 1989. (R(B), u(\*))

**Cassin's Honeyguide** *Prodotiscus insignis*. Seen in secondary forest at Nimba (K&CC), Nov 1988. (R(B), u(\*))

**European Wryneck** *Jynx torquilla*. One at Yekepa, Nov 1988, seen by 1 (PM, u(\*))

**Grey Woodpecker** *Mesopicos goertae*. One in garden near St Paul's River, Nov 1988, seen by K&CC. (R(B), r-u(\*))

**Rufous-naped Bush-Lark** *Mirafra africana*. Two or three singing in grassland at Yekepa on the Guinea border, Nov 1989. Other ground-nesting birds, e.g. Long-billed Pipit *Anthus similis*, were feeding young at this time and their behavior suggests that they were about to breed. (AfM/NB, r(\*))

**House Martin** *Delichon urbica*. 4-6 feeding over British Embassy compound, Monrovia, 27 Dec 1988 and 1 Jan 1989. (PM, r(\*))

**African Rock Martin** *Hirundo fuligula*. Seen only in the area of Yekepa where 8-10 were present on every visit. (RB, u(\*))

**White-throated Blue Swallow** *Hirundo nigrita*. Common along the lower reaches of all the rivers I visited, nesting under bridges. (RB, u-c).

**Fanti Rough-wing Swallow** *Psalidoprocne obscura*. Common at Nimba, but none seen on subsequent visits in Jun and Nov 1988. Common in forest clearings along streams near Buchanan, Nov 1988, with total of 20 counted in one area. Indicates a movement towards the coast during the rains. (RB, AfM, u(\*))

**Long-billed Pipit** *Anthus similis*. Pair carrying food in grassland high in the hills, Nov 1989. (RB, u-c)

**Tree Pipit** *Anthus trivialis*. 1-3 seen in gardens at Yekepa Nov 1988, Nov 1990 and at Lofa, Mar 1989. (PM, u-c)

**African Pied Wagtail** *Motacilla aguimp*. Seen only on St Paul's River coast, pair feeding young in nest under jetty, Jan 1990. (RB, u)

**Wattled Cuckoo-Shrike** *Campephaga lobata*. Male in secondary forest at Buchanan County (with WG), 6 Mar 1989, is my only record of this endangered bird. (R)

**Red-shouldered Cuckoo Shrike** *Campephaga phoenicea*. One male in secondary forest at Nimba, 6 Mar 1989. (RB, r(\*))

**Gambian Puff-back Shrike** *Dryoscopus gambensis*. Only record is one near Poro, Mar 1988. (RB, u-c)

**Bell Shrike** *Laniarius ferrugineus*. One seen and heard in British Embassy compound, 16 and 20 Sep 1988 during what appeared to be a migration of African birds to the coast, including the very obvious movement of *Treron calva*. (R(B), r(\*))

**Sooty Boubou** *Laniarius leucorhynchus*. One in secondary bush at Zwedru, Nov 1988. (RB, u(\*))

**Brown-headed Tchagra** *Tchagra australis*. At least two singing males in open country at LAC, Jun 1998. (R(B), u(\*))

**Fiscal Shrike** *Lanius collaris*. Breeding prior to the rains in Feb-Mar when

nests were found in and around Monrovia. (RB, a)

**Blue-shouldered Robin-Chat** *Cossypha cyanocampter*. Seen only in secondary forest and gardens at Yekepa, where present on all my visits. (RB, u (\*))

**Olive Thrush** *Turdus pelios*. Single birds appeared in the British Embassy garden in Mar-Apr 1988 and subsequently, infrequently during the dry seasons. (RB, r-u)

**Black-capped Apalis** *Apalis nigriceps*. A pair entering a nest in hanging moss high in a tree on Nimba Mountain, Nov 1988. (RB, r-u (\*))

**Grey-backed Camaroptera** *Camaroptera brachyura*. Nesting recorded only during the latter part of the rains; two newly hatched young in nest in low bush in British Embassy garden, Nov 1988; carrying food in same area, Nov 1989. (RB, a)

**Rock-loving Cisticola** *Cisticola aberrans*. Two on cliff at Mamba Point, Monrovia, 2 Oct 1988, during period of apparent migration of African species. (RB, u (\*))

**Lemon-bellied Crombec** *Sylvietta denti*. Pair feeding two young in nest attached to top of a single thorn stem at Yekepa, 5 Nov 1988. Several unoccupied or used nests were subsequently found in the Yekepa area. (RB, r-u)

**White-browed Forest Flycatcher** *Fraseria cinerascens*. Single in forest at Lofa County (with WG), Mar 1989. (R(B), r (\*))

**Forest Flycatcher** *Fraseria ocreata*. Pair feeding young c. 10 m up in tree in forest clearing at Sapu National Park, Nov 1988 would appear to be the first confirmed breeding record. Elsewhere only seen in forest at Lofa (with WG), Mar 1989. (R(B), u-c)

**Cassin's Grey Flycatcher** *Muscicapa cassini*. Nest containing two young on tree trunk over stream in Lofa County (with WG), Mar 1989. (RB, c)

**Shrike Flycatcher** *Megabyas flammulata*. Several seen in clearing at Sapu National Park, Nov 1988 and at Lofa, Mar 1989. (RB, u)

**Black Tit** *Parus leucomelas*. One in British Embassy garden, Monrovia, 26 Apr 1988 is the first confirmed record for Liberia. (Included in Gatter 1988 on the basis of this record, RB, V(\*).)

**Yellow-chinned Sunbird** *Anthreptes rectirostris*. Not uncommon in secondary bush at VOA; several seen Nov 1988. (RB, u-c(\*))

**Buff-throated Sunbird** *Nectarinia adelberti*. Local; seen only in secondary bush at Yekepa and LAC, Nov 1988. (RB, AfM, u-c)

**Splendid Sunbird** *Nectarinia coccinigaster*. One in garden at Yekepa, Jun 1988. ((RB), AfM, r-u(\*))

**Copper Sunbird** *Nectarinia cuprea*. One in garden at Yekepa, Jun 1988. (RB, AfM, r-u (\*))

**Yellow-fronted Canary** *Serinus mozambicus*. Pair seen regularly in British Embassy garden in Monrovia throughout 1989. (R(B), r-u(\*))

**Waxbill** *Estrilda astrild*. Seen only in secondary growth bordering gardens at Yekepa where small group was present, Nov 1988. (RB, r-c)

**African Fire-Finch** *Langonosticta rubricata*. Small parties, max. c. 10 in open country near Robertsport, Mar 1988 (with WG and GH) and on several occasions in

same area during 1989; not seen elsewhere. (RB, u-c)(\*)

**Chestnut-breasted Negro-Finch *Nigrita bicolor***. Nest-building in thick foliage c. 10 m up in a small tree in a clearing at Sapo National Park, Nov 1988. (RB, c)

**Quail Finch *Ortyospiza atricollis***. A large flock of c. 50-80 on roadside near Lake Piso, Oct 1988; not seen on other visits in Feb, Mar and Nov. (R(B), u-c (\*))

**House Sparrow *Passer domesticus***. Single male in British Embassy garden on 13 Jul 1989 is the first record for Liberia. The same, or another, male was seen c. 100 metres away (during a gun battle outside the Embassy!) on 28 Jun 1990.

**Grosbeaked Weaver *Amblyospiza albifrons***. Total of c. 8 in swamp and adjoining bush at Yekepa, Nov 1988. (B(AfM), r, (\*))

**Gola Malimbe *Malimbus ballmanni***. Two pairs seen within 0.5 km of each other near the research station at Sapo National Park, Nov 1988. They were feeding high up, but beneath the canopy; one pair was carrying nesting material. (RB, r-c (\*))

**Weaver *Ploceus* sp.** Two sightings of an unidentified species including black-masked males with pure yellow on forehead and crown: a flock of c. 30 at LAC, Nov 1988; c. 6 at Guthries Plantation, Mar 1990. (Two candidate species placed in square brackets: *P. heuglini* and *P. pelzelni*.)

**Yellow-mantled Weaver *Ploceus tricolor***. Two or three in forest clearings at Sapo National Park, Nov 1988, and Lofa, Mar 1989. (RB, u)

**Splendid Glossy Starling *Lamprolornis splendidus***. Flocks appeared (sometimes 50+) each year in open woodland and gardens bordering St Paul's River and at Guthries Estate in Sep-Oct, coinciding with the observed arrival of other African migrants. (RB, AfM? u-c)

**Long-tailed Glossy Starling *Lamprolornis caudatus***. A pair was seen in a garden bordering St Paul's River, Jan-Mar 1989, by R. Tillin, who subsequently recorded them on video. The video tape confirms the identification. First record for Liberia.

**Chestnut-winged Starling *Onychognathus fulgidus***. One record: small flock in northern Lofa County (with WG), 7 Mar 1989. (RB, u (\*))

**Narrow-tailed Starling *Poeyoptera lugubris***. One record: two in northern Lofa County (with WG), 6 Mar 1989. (RB, u (\*))

**Black-winged Oriole *Oriolus brachyrhynchus***. One in forest at Lofa, 8 Mar 1989. (RB, u(\*))

**Pied Crow *Corvus albus***. Surprisingly rare; seen only at VOA where 1-2 pairs appeared to be resident, nesting in the radio pylons. (RB, r-u)

**Piaciac *Ptilostomus afer***. A single bird visited the British Embassy garden on several mornings from 19 May to 15 Jun 1988; not seen subsequently. It would fly in from some waste ground and then move off towards the beach. At first I assumed that it was an escapee from a ship, but it appeared to be wild and in view of the number of other Sahel species which are now appearing in Liberia, as the forest has been cleared, I am of the view that it was a wild bird. First record for Liberia. (V?, r(\*), ? escaped bird)

## References

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Fiscal Shrike - Pie-grièche fiscale - *Lanius collaris*

Photo: Michael Gore