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Notes on the distribution and abundance of birds observed in Guinea-Bissau, 21 February to 3 April 1992

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Received 18 July 1994
Revised 10 February 1996

Summary

Observations of birds from 15 different locations in Guinea-Bissau are presented. Two hundred and seventy-nine species were seen from 21 February to 3 April 1992, of which six (White-crested Tiger Heron *Tigriornis leucocephalus*, Gabar Goshawk *Micronisus gabar*, Rock Pratincole *Glareola nuchalis*, White-throated Blue Swallow *Hirundo nigrita*, Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea*, and Yellow-breasted Apalis *Apalis flavida*) were recorded in Guinea-Bissau for the first time. The total number of species seen in the country currently stands at 451.

Résumé

L'article présente la liste des oiseaux observés en Guinée-Bissau en 15 endroits différents, du 21 février au 3 avril 1992, soit un total de 279 espèces. Six espèces (Onoré à huppe blanche *Tigriornis leucocephalus*, Autour gabar *Micronisus gabar*, Glaréole auréolée *Glareola nuchalis*, Hirondelle à bavette *Hirundo nigrita*, Bergeronnette des ruisseaux *Motacilla cinerea*, et Apalis à gorge jaune *Apalis flavida*), sont signalées pour la première fois dans le pays. Le nombre total d'espèces observées dans le pays s'élève actuellement à 451.

Introduction

The avifauna of Guinea-Bissau is one of the least known of any African country. There are few ornithological publications and information regarding the distribution and abundance of birds from the interior or the country is lacking.

In recent years, projects run by Canadian and Dutch biologists have provided a considerable amount of new information. Canadian scientists working for CECI (French-Canadian aid agency), in collaboration with government staff from Guinea-Bissau, have participated in a diverse array of zoological projects. An inventory of 383 bird species recorded by CECI personnel and from existing

publications was produced by Smith & Limoges (undated), considerably more than the 313 given by Dowsett (1993). Surveys of the southern regions (Tombali and Gabú) are still providing further information for the proposed Dulombi National Park. Dutch research has primarily concentrated on waders and terns wintering in the Bijagos Islands. Observations of other Palaearctic and Afrotrropical species are reported in Poorter & Zwarts (1984), Altenburg & van der Kamp (1986, 1992), Zwarts (1988), Wymenga & Altenburg (1992) and Hazeveld (1996).

Table 1. Locations visited (numbered as in Fig. 1).

No.	Location	Coordinates		Dates (1992)
		N	W	
1	São Domingões	12°24'	16°12'	21-22 Feb, 10-12 Mar, 3 Apr Coastal forest, oil palm plantations, tidal river and marsh.
2	São Vicente	12°14'	16°46'	22 Feb Mangrove marsh, tidal river.
3	Bula	12°6'	15°43'	23-24 Feb, 7-8, 12-13, 22-26 Mar Mixed agricultural land, paddy fields, sedge beds, open water.
4	Bissau	11°51'	15°36'	24-25 Feb Tidal harbour
5	Bolama	11°34'	15°29'	26-27 Feb Coastal forest, oil palm plantations, tidal marsh.
6	São João/Brandão	11°35'	15°27'	27 Feb Coastal forest, oil palm plantations.
7	Tite/Enxudé	11°46'	15°24'	27 Feb Dry paddy fields.
8	Mansôa	12°4'	15°19'	28-29 Feb, 3, 13, 20-22 Mar Low scrub, mixed agriculture, dry paddy fields, tidal river.
9	Farim	12°29'	15°13'	29 Feb to 3 Mar Low scrub, mixed agriculture, tidal river, mangrove marsh, reed pockets.
10	Bafatá	12°10'	14°40'	4-5 Mar Wooded river banks, river, tidal creeks, paddy fields.
11	Contabane	11°32'	14°43'	14-17 Mar Secondary forest, mixed agriculture.
12	Chumael	11°41'	14°40'	17-20 Mar Low scrub, mixed agriculture,
13	Dandum	11°43'	14°13'	27-30 Mar Riverine forest strips, dry grassland, river, mixed agriculture.
14	Tché Tché	11°55'	14°13'	28 Mar Riverine forest strips, river.
15	Madina Dongo	11°38'	14°33'	31 Mar to 1 Apr Open woodland, dry grassland, pockets of secondary forest.

Prior to this paper, the total number of species reliably reported in Guinea-Bissau was 437 (Hazevoet 1996), including records from Fairbairn (1932), Frade & Bacelar (1955, 1959), Naurois (1966, 1969), Voous (1970), Madureira (1978), Poorter & Zwarts (1984), Altenburg & van der Kamp (1986, 1992), Wymenga & Altenburg (1992) and Hazevoet (1996).

This paper presents observations from 15 different locations (see Table 1 and Fig. 1) in Guinea-Bissau from 21 February to 3 April 1992. Most of the sites were inland, close to major water-courses. Brief notes on the habitat of each site are given in Table 1. The observations were made at the end of the dry season, and during the main period of passage for Palaearctic migrants.

The primary objective of the expedition was to assess the possibility of future ringing studies of Palaearctic migrants in Guinea-Bissau, although observations of all species were recorded.

A considerable amount of fieldwork is needed to improve our knowledge of the avifauna of Guinea-Bissau. Forests in the south and west of the country are being cleared at an alarming rate and it is essential that a network of reserves be established before many species are lost from the country. This paper provides important data about the current status of birds from these regions.

Results

Results are presented in the Appendix as a systematic list of 279 species.

There were no large concentrations of Palaearctic passersines either wintering or on passage in Guinea-Bissau. The rice fields bordering most of the water-courses had small numbers of Yellow Wagtail, White Wagtail, Tawny Pipit and Winchat (scientific names are given in the systematic list). A few Sedge and Reed Warblers were restricted to pockets of reed (*Phragmites* spp.) and sedge (*Carex* spp.). Melodious and Willow Warblers were found in low densities throughout the country in coastal forest and savana, and small numbers of Pied Flycatchers occurred in secondary forest.

The following six species were documented in Guinea-Bissau for the first time.

One White-crested Tiger Heron was seen closely, fishing from the edge of the Rio Corubal in deep shade; when disturbed it froze erect, then flew away. It resembled a long-necked Eurasian Bittern *Botaurus stellaris*, with darker brown plumage, but with the upperparts finely barred buff and lacking the streaking of Eurasian Bittern. The white crown feathers were concealed. White-crested Tiger Heron has been recorded in small numbers in forested regions of neighbouring Guinea and Senegal (Richards 1982, Sala 1983, Morel & Morel 1990).

Gabar Goshawk was recorded twice, in March. The birds were smaller than Dark Chanting Goshawk, with grey upper breast and finely barred belly; upperparts dark grey with narrow white rump; tail more heavily barred than that of Shikra and lacking dark central feathers of Dark Chanting Goshawk; red legs

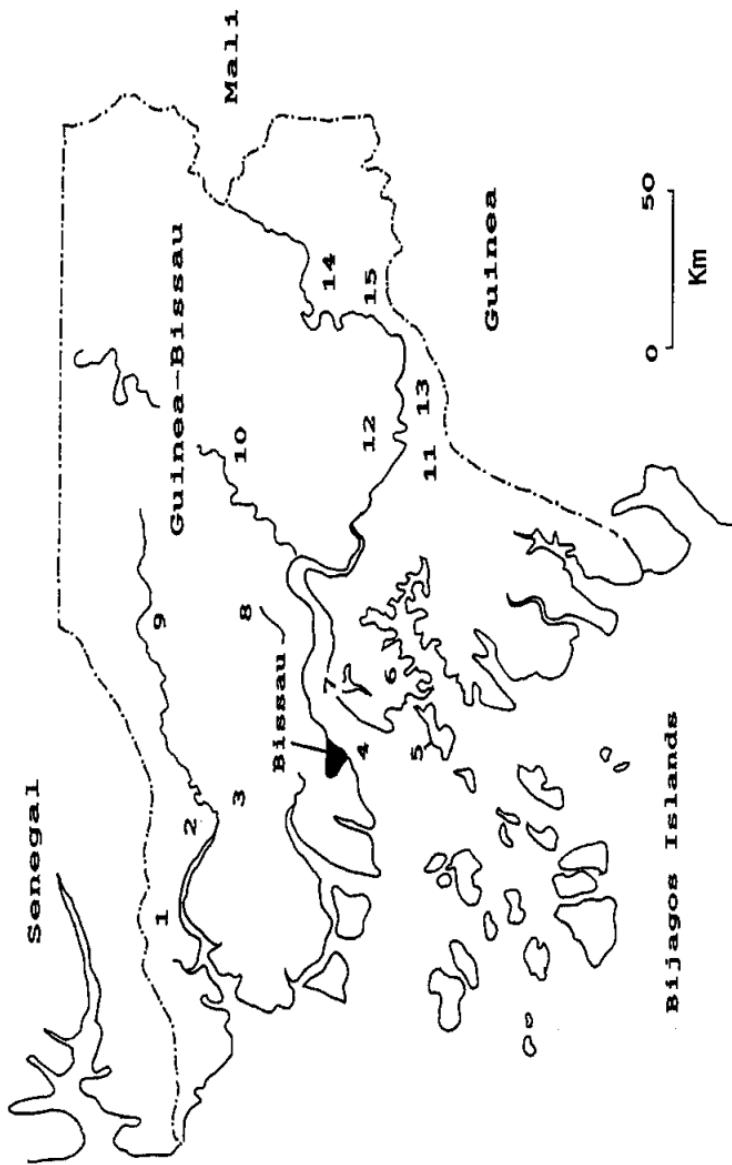


Fig. 1. Localities listed in Table 1.

of one of the birds (which was perched) seen. Gabar Goshawk occurs in open woodland of Mali and Senegal (Lamarche 1980, Morel & Morel 1990).

Eight Rock Pratincoles were seen standing on boulders in the Rio Corubal, 31 March and 1 April. They were later seen hawking insects along the river, in company with Common Pratincoles, which were obviously larger than they. The hind-collar was pale buff, unlike that of the Sierra Leone subspecies *G. n. nuchalis*. Rock Pratincole was recently found in Guinea, and is uncommon in Mali (Walsh 1987, Lamarche 1980).

Up to five White-throated Blue Swallows were seen flying up and down the Rio Corubal. The distinctive blue plumage with white tail streaks and small throat patch were seen clearly. This species has been recorded at one location in Guinea (Halleux 1994).

A female Grey Wagtail was seen on two days on the Rio Corubal, feeding from boulders in the river. The dark slate upperparts were seen clearly. This is a rare Palaearctic migrant to Mali and Senegal (Lamarche 1981, Morel & Morel 1990).

Yellow-breasted Apalis was recorded on two dates in February, at Bula and Mansôa. Both birds were skulking in low scrub but views of the grey head, green upperparts, white chin and throat, and broad, bright yellow breast patch (black spot not visible), were obtained, sufficient to enable identification. This species is unrecorded from neighbouring countries, although small numbers have been found in The Gambia (Morel & Morel 1990, Wacher 1993).

A further eight species (Grasshopper Buzzard, Turtle Dove, Lesser Honeyguide, Willcocks's Honeyguide, Sun Lark, Slender-billed Bulbul, Yellow-throated Leaf-love and Grey Tit-babbler) were observed, which are shown as occurring in Guinea-Bissau on maps in Brown *et al.* (1982), Urban *et al.* (1986), Fry *et al.* (1988) and Keith *et al.* (1992), although no reference to the original observations have been found.

The total number of species recorded in Guinea-Bissau is now 451. Undoubtedly, the range of many more species that occur in Guinea and Sierra Leone, extend north into Guinea-Bissau.

Acknowledgments

I would especially like to thank: Stephen Runsey and the Wetland Trust for funding and providing logistical support for the trip; David Kelly, who accompanied me for the first two weeks; Jean-Marc Leger from CECI and Fai Djedjo and his colleagues from the Guinea-Bissau ministry responsible for wildlife protection, for enabling me to join them on two field trips into the south of the country and providing considerable help and support. Benoît Limoges and Richard Smith kindly provided me with a copy of their report listing the ornithological records collected by CECI personnel, Kees Hazeveld, Gérard and Marie-Yvonne Morel, Alan Tye and Frank Walsh assisted with their helpful comments.

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Appendix
Systematic list

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The list follows the order and names used by Brown *et al.* (1982), Urban *et al.* (1986) and Fry *et al.* (1988) for non-passerines and Serle & Mord (1977) for passerines. Numbers in the body of the table are totals counted at the locality during the period of observations there. C = common, 1-10 may be seen or heard in suitable habitat per day. F = frequent, often seen. P = present, numbers seen unrecorded. An asterisk indicates species not mentioned by Frade & Bacclar (1955, 1959) nor by Hazeveld (1996), other than in his Appendix 1 of unreliably reported species.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	Species Location No. (see Table I and Fig. 1)
Phalacrocoracidae																
<i>Phalacrocorax africanus</i> Long-tailed Cormorant	2		1						1		17					1
Anhingidae																
<i>Anhinga melanogaster</i> Darter	1		1						30	3	P					1
Pelecanidae																
<i>Pelecanus onocrotalus</i> Great White Pelican	6		29						P							
<i>P. rufescens</i> Pink-backed Pelican									10	P						
Ardeidae																
<i>Ixobrychus minutus</i> Little Bittern		1														
* <i>Tigrornis leucocephalus</i> White-crested Tiger Heron									P	P	2					
<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i> Black-crowned Night Heron	1		5							2	2	10				
<i>Ardeola ralloides</i> Squacco Heron	P					P				P	P	200		P	P	1
<i>Bubulcus ibis</i> Cattle Egret	1		34	355	1			1		1	1					
<i>Butorides striatus</i> Green Heron										P	P					
<i>Egretta ardesiaca</i> Black Heron	1	11	7	1	P											
<i>E. grisea</i> Western Reef Heron	1		1							P	P					1
<i>E. garzetta</i> Little Egret											1					
<i>E. intermedia</i> Yellow-billed Egret								3				2				
<i>E. alba</i> Great Egret	P	3	2	1				1	P	P	P					
<i>Ardea pygmaea</i> Purple Heron	1		1						1	1	3					
<i>A. cinerea</i> Grey Heron	3	2	1						1	1	1	2				

<i>A. melanoptera</i>	Black-headed Heron	2	1	P	P	P
Scopidae						
<i>Scopus umbretta</i>	Hamerkop	4	4	1	1	1
Ciconiidae						
<i>Myceria ibis</i>	Yellow-billed Stork	3		4	P	
<i>Ciconia episcopus</i>	Woolly-necked Stork	1		4		1
<i>Lepoptilos crumeniferus</i>	Marabou Stork			2		
Threskiornithidae						
<i>Bostrychia hagedash</i>	Hadada			2		2
<i>Thekeciornis aethiopicus</i>	Sacred Ibis	11	1	2	7	
<i>Platalea alba</i>	African Spoonbill	5	5	1	14	P
Anatidae						
<i>Dendrocygna viduata</i>	White-faced Whistling Duck	2				
<i>Alopochen aegyptiacus</i>	Egyptian Goose	3				
<i>Plectropterus gambensis</i>	Spur-winged Goose	330				
<i>Nettapus auritus</i>	Pygmy Goose	12				
<i>Anas acuta</i>	Northern Pintail	150				
Pandionidae						
<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>	Osprey					1
Accipitridae						
<i>Eliurus caeruleus</i>	Black-shouldered Kite	1		1	2	1
<i>Milvus migrans</i>	Black Kite	P	P	P	P	1
<i>Haliastur vocifer</i>	River Eagle	P	1	1	P	
<i>Gypohierax angolensis</i>	Palm-nut Vulture	P	P	P	P	P
<i>Necrosyrtes monachus</i>	Hooded Vulture	P	P	C	P	P
<i>Gyps africanus</i>	White-backed Vulture		1		1	1
<i>G. rueppellii</i>	Rüppell's Griffon Vulture				1	1
<i>Aegypius occipitalis</i>	White-headed Vulture	1			2	
<i>Terathopius ecaudatus</i>	Bateleur				1	2
<i>Polyboroides typus</i>	HARRIER Hawk	2		P	P	1
<i>Circus pygargus</i>	Montagu's Harrier					1

Species Location No. (see Table 1 and Fig. 1)														
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
<i>Arenaria interpres</i> Turnstone														
<i>Phalaropus fulicarius</i> Grey Phalarope														
Laridae														
<i>Larus cirrocephalus</i> Grey-headed Gull														
Sternidae														
<i>Gelochelidon nilotica</i> Gull-billed Tern	1	1	2	2										
<i>Sterna caspia</i> Caspian Tern		4	P	P										
<i>S. maxima</i> Royal Tern			1											
<i>S. sandvicensis</i> Sandwich Tern				P	P									
<i>S. hirundo</i> Common Tern					P									
<i>S. albifrons</i> Little Tern						1								
<i>Chlidonias hybrida</i> Whiskered Tern							8							
<i>C. leucopterus</i> White-winged Black Tern								18						
Pterodactyidae									P	P				
<i>Pterocles quadricinctus</i> Four-banded Sandgrouse										P				
Columbidae											P	P	P	P
<i>Terenula calva</i> Green Pigeon											P	P	P	P
<i>Turtur</i> after Blue-spotted Wood Dove											P	P	P	P
<i>T. abyssinicus</i> Black-billed Wood Dove											P	P	P	P
<i>Oena capensis</i> Namaqua Dove	1	1					F	1			P	1	1	
<i>Streptopelia semitorquata</i> Red-eyed Dove											P	P	P	
<i>S. decipiens</i> Mourning Dove											2	2	1	
<i>S. vinacea</i> Vinaceous Dove	C	1									P	P	P	
* <i>S. turcica</i> Turtle Dove											40			
<i>S. senegalensis</i> Laughing Dove											P	P	P	
Psittacidae											P	P	P	P
<i>Poicephalus senegalus</i> Senegal Parrot											P	P	P	P
<i>Psittacula krameri</i> Rose-ringed Parakeet											P	P	P	P

