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Reply to Moore

***Gyps africanus* White-backed Vulture.** Moore (2000) states that we suggest "that the only record [of the species on Bioko], an adult female reported by Alexander (1903), was a misidentified Palm-nut Vulture *Gypohierax angolensis*". Our arguments were based on the supposition that Alexander did not actually collect the bird. If he did, then I agree with Moore (2000) that we should accept White-backed Vulture as vagrant on Bioko. If he did not, then it should be rejected from the Bioko list in the light of the arguments presented by Pérez del Val *et al*. (1997).

Arguments that favour the idea that Alexander collected the bird include:

1. Alexander (1903) writes "Ad. ♀", suggesting that he examined a specimen.

Arguments unfavourable to the idea include:

2. In Alexander's (1903) list for Bioko there are also other species that were recorded by him but not collected (*Corvus albus*, *Actitis hypoleucos*, *Psittacus erithacus*).
3. Alexander did not observe Palm-nut Vulture *Gypohierax angolensis*, which is common and conspicuous in Bioko (Pérez del Val *et al*. 1997).

These arguments are not definitive, and personal opinion will give more weight to some than others. At the very least, in the absence of a specimen or firmer evidence that one once existed, the record must be regarded as unconfirmed.

***Vanellus albiceps* White-crowned Plover.** We simply accepted the view of Amadon (1953) rather than that of Urban *et al*. (1986). The decision rests on whether to rely on the testimony of Allen, who collected the specimen, or Fraser, who redescribed it 16 years later. Although Moore (2000) is correct that many species collected during the Niger expeditions were wrongly attributed to locality by both Allen and Fraser, and that therefore their localities, including that of the present species, must remain in some doubt, the species cannot be regarded as having been proved to occur on Bioko.

I would like to thank Alan Tye for improving the text of this reply.

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Colour of the downy young and notes on breeding and food of the Grasshopper Buzzard *Butastur rufipennis* in Niger

Cheke (1995) has described the young of the Grasshopper Buzzard *Butastur rufipennis*, adding, however, that there was confusion about the colour of their down. We should like to comment on this question, and at the same time give a more complete description of the young and breeding habits of the species.

Along the road to Say, 26 km south of Niamey, Niger, there is a 6–7 km wide laterite plateau with tigerbush vegetation (13°17′N, 2°11′E). Tigerbush is a type of patterned vegetation where bands of crusted bare soil alternate with dense bands of 2–6 m high bushes. The bands run more or less parallel to the contours, each being 10–30 m wide. At around 8h00 on 16 Jul 1993, six weeks after the start of the rainy season, JB saw an adult Grasshopper Buzzard flying across the road there, with a twig in its beak. The next day, we found a Grasshopper Buzzard nest in the first line of trees, *c.* 15 m from the road. It was easy to reach, 4.5 m up in a *Combretum* tree (probably *C. nigricans*), made of branches and twigs, and lined with fresh leaves. In the nest were two white (not grey: see Cheke 1995) downy young *c*. 20 cm in length. Their ceres, gapes and claws were pale yellow, the distal halves of their beaks dark grey. They had dark brownish grey irides. One of the young was prostrate. Based on the late pin stage of their flight feathers (see below), and on comparison with the speed of development of similarly sized raptors in The Netherlands (Bijlsma 1997), we estimate their age at *c.* 11–12 days.