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Received 13 February 2002

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### House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* colonises Guinea-Bissau

In early May 2001, we noticed some House Sparrows *Passer domesticus* in the old Bissau harbour known as Pidjiguiti. On 23 May, we found a small population nesting in harbour structures (two nests seen) and feeding within the harbour limits. We estimated *c.* 10–20 House Sparrows living in the port, over an area of *c.* 6 ha. We found no sparrows in Bissau city centre, which is right beside the harbour. Unfortunately, we could not determine the subspecies of these birds.

To our knowledge, House Sparrow has never been recorded in Guinea-Bissau (*e.g.* Frade & Bacelar 1955, Hazevoet 1996). It is likely that they have arrived very recently, since we have been in the harbour and city centre many times in the last few years without noticing any. House Sparrows have been present in Senegal and The Gambia (north of Guinea-Bissau) from the 1970s and 1980s, respectively (Gore 1990, Morel & Morel 1990, Barlow *et al.* 1997). The source of the new immigrants is unknown, but the site suggests that they might have arrived by ship. In fact, according to our observations, House Sparrows are still absent from coastal towns north (and south) of Bissau (*e.g.* Cacheu, São Domingos) that should perhaps have been reached first if the colonisers had come overland from Senegal.

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Received 21 February 2002

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## Baillon's Crake *Porzana pusilla*, new to The Gambia, with notes on seven other species

Unless otherwise stated the records below refer to Kartung (13°12'N, 16°45'W) in the south of The Gambia, in 2001. Previously known Gambian status, as given by Barlow *et al.* (1999), is given in square brackets. All bird measurements are in mm.

***Turnix sylvatica* Little Button-Quail.** One trapped on 16 Mar, having been seen for a few days previously. After this, up to six were present for several days. [Infrequent and local.]

***Porzana pusilla* Baillon's Crake.** At about 8h00 on 22 Feb, Stella Beavan and I were walking around some pools, when she spotted a small crake. We watched it for more than 2 h with binoculars and a telescope, down to <7 m, and concluded, using Barlow *et al.* (1999), that it must be a Baillon's Crake. It was feeding in a fairly extensive area of sparse, grassy growth, up to 30 cm high, in shallow water on the edge of a bed of *Typha* reeds. It walked around, making rapid pecks, occasionally with short, darting runs, preferring the denser parts of the vegetation. It was small, dumpy and brown, clearly striped and spotted, and smaller and with shorter legs than nearby Black Crakes *Amaurornis flavirostris*. The forehead and top of the crown were chestnut brown, the nape slightly paler forming a slight collar. The back was blackish, streaked white, with the sides of the back chestnut brown with black streaks. Scapulars, wing-coverts and primaries carried some white spotting. The sides of the face, chest and flanks were plain slate grey, the belly and rear flanks boldly striped white and blackish. The dark-centred remiges were broadly edged and tipped buff, emphasising a V effect at the sides of the back. The tail projected a short way beyond the