West African Ornithological Society
Société d'Ornithologie de l'Ouest Africain

Join the WAOS and support the future availability of free pdfs on this website.

http://malimbus.free.fr/member.htm

If this link does not work, please copy it to your browser and try again.

Devenez membre de la SOOA et soutenez la disponibilité future des pdfs gratuits sur ce site.

http://malimbus.free.fr/adhesion.htm

Si ce lien ne fonctionne pas, veuillez le copier pour votre navigateur et réessayer.

May/mai 2014

Short Notes — Notes Courtes

The first record of Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus* in SW Cameroon

The Short-eared Owl *Asio flammeus* is a cosmopolitan species, breeding in the Holarctic and Neotropic regions. It is partially migratory, especially in the northern part of its range (Hoyo *et al*. 1999). European Short-eared Owls winter mainly in the northern Afrotropics (Cramp 1985), but small numbers cross the Sahara to Mali, Sudan, Ethiopia, and irregularly to Somalia and Kenya (Moreau 1972, Lamarche 1980, Britton 1982). Other records are known from Mauritania (Gee 1984, Lamarche 1988), Senegal (Morel & Morel 1990, Rodwell *et al*. 1996, Sauvage & Rodwell 1998), The Gambia (Barlow *et al*. 1997), Guinea (Morel & Morel 1988), Liberia (Gatter 1997), Niger (Giraudoux *et al*. 1998) and Nigeria (Velmala & Gustafsson 2003).

On 14 January 2008 (*c.* 10h00), we flushed a Short-eared Owl on a lava flow in the southern foothills of Mt Cameroon (SW Province, Cameroon, 4°13′0″N, 9°10′21″E, 100 m a.s.l.). The owl was hidden between lava stones and took off at *c.* 10 m distance. It had a wingspan of *c.* 1 m. The upperparts were buff with dark streaks, and with several dark stripes on the tail. The underparts were not seen well, but the underwings were very pale with dark wing tips and carpal patches. We did not notice ear tufts, and the eyes were bright yellow. The flight was slow and low, alternating wing beats with gliding. The owl disappeared between lava stones after a 40–50 m flight. We did not find any pellets in the area.

This species can be confused with Marsh Owl *A. capensis*, but the latter has dark upperparts and eyes (Borrow & Demey 2001). Such a misidentification was probably the case for supposed Short-eared Owl records in The Gambia (Gore 1981, Smalley 1983). Our observation was during daylight and at close range, which enabled us to determine the species correctly. The combination of pale upperparts with dark streaks and dark carpal patches excludes confusion with Barn Owl *Tyto alba* and African Grass Owl *T. capensis*. African Grass Owl (which has dark carpal patches) is only locally uncommon in the area (Borrow & Demey 2001, Dowsett-Lemaire 2001), and often inhabits grassy habitats near freshwater. There are no freshwater surfaces within several km of the lava flow; there is only the Atlantic coast and some freshwater streams springing near the beach. Furthermore, all of us have previous field experience with Short-eared Owl in Europe, while JR has experience with other African owl species including similar ones (Riegert *et al*. in press).

Mt Cameroon erupted in March 1999, when the forest and surrounding oil-palm plantations were fragmented by black lava flows (alcalic basalt), extending 6–7 km from the main crater. The lava flow is now experiencing a primary succession. Lava flow is similar open terrain to other habitats occupied by the species, while ssp. *A. f. galapagoensis* is well known to inhabit lava fields in the Galapagos Islands (Groot 1983).

To date, there is only one record of Short-eared Owl in Cameroon (Messemaker 2003): an individual found dead at Mare Mdawe in the far north (11°25′N, 14°34′E) in January 2001. Our record represents one of the southernmost winter occurrences of the species in Africa; similar to that where Short-eared Owl was seen in Liberia (Gatter 1997) and Kenya (Lewis & Pomeroy 1989). Records near the Cameroon border are known from N Nigeria near L Chad, where the species was seen four times (Elgood *et al*. 1994, Velmala & Gustafsson 2003); although some of these were considered doubtful (Elgood *et al*. 1994), the most recent one was supported by a photograph (see Velmala & Gustafsson 2003).

We wish to thank MSM (6007665801) and GAAV (IAA601410709) for financial support.

References

BARLOW, C., WACHER T. & DISLEY, T. (1997) *A Field Guide to Birds of The Gambia and Senegal*. Pica Press, Mountfield.

BORROW, N. & DEMEY, R. (2001) *Birds of Western Africa*. Christopher Helm, London.

BRITTON, P.L. (ed.) (1982) *Birds of East Africa: their status and distribution*. East Africa Natural History Society, Nairobi.

CRAMP, S. (ed.) (1985) *Handbook of the Birds of Europe, the Middle East and North Africa. Vol. IV - Terns to Woodpeckers*. Oxford University Press, New York.

DOWSETT, R.J. & DOWSETT-LEMAIRE, F. (2001) First records of Scarce Swift *Schoutedenapus myoptilus* and Grass Owl *Tyto capensis* from Mt Cameroun. *Malimbus* 23(2):110–111.

ELGOOD, J.H., HEIGHAM, J.B., MOORE, A.M., NASON, A.M., SHARLAND, R.E. & SKINNER, N.J. (1994) *The Birds of Nigeria*. Checklist 4 (2nd ed.), British Ornithologists′ Union, Tring.

GATTER, W. (1997) *Birds of Liberia*. Pica Press, Mountfield.

GEE, J.P. (1984) The birds of Mauritania. *Malimbus* 6: 31–66.

GIRAUDOUX, P., DEGAUQUIER, R., JONES, P.J., WEIGEL, J. & ISENMAN, P. (1988) Avifaune du Niger: état des connaissances en 1986. *Malimbus* 10: 1–140.

GORE, M.E.J. (1981) *Birds of The Gambia*. Checklist 3, British Ornithologists‘ Union, London.

GROOT, R.S. DE (1983) Origin, status and ecology of the owls in Galapagos. *Ardea* 71: 167–182.

HOYO, J. DEL, ELLIOT, A. & SARGATAL, J. (eds) (1999) *Handbook of the Birds of the World. Vol. 5. Barn-owls to Hummingbirds*. Lynx, Barcelona.

LAMARCHE, B. (1980) Liste commentée des oiseaux du Mali. *Malimbus* 2: 121–158.

LAMARCHE, B. (1988) Liste commentée des oiseaux de Mauritanie. *Études Sahariennes et Quest-Africaines* 1(4): 1–162.

LEWIS, A. & POMEROY, D. (1989) *A Bird Atlas of Kenya*. A.A. Balkema, Rotterdam.

MESSEMAKER, R. (2003) *in* Recent Reports. *Bull. Afr. Bird Club* 10: 56.

MOREAU, R.E. (1972) *The Palaearctic-African Bird Migration Systems*. Academic Press, London.

MOREL, G.J. & MOREL, M.-Y. (1988) Liste des oiseaux de Guineé. *Malimbus* 10: 143–176.

MOREL, G.J. & MOREL, M.-Y. (1990) *Les Oiseaux de Sénégambie*. ORSTOM, Paris.

RIEGERT, J., SEDLÁČEK, O. & HUTTERER, R. (in press) Diet of sympatric African Grass Owl (*Tyto capensis*) and Spotted Eagle Owl (*Bubo africanus*) in the Bamenda Highlands, NW Cameroon. *Afr. J. Ecol*.

RODWELL, S.P., SAUVAGE, A., RUMSEY, S.J.R. & BRÄULICH, A. (1996) An annotated checklist of birds occuring at the Parc National des Oiseaux du Djoudj in Senegal, 1984–1994. *Malimbus* 18: 74–111.

SAUVAGE, A. & RODWELL, S.P. (1998) Notable observations of birds in Senegal (excluding Parc National des Oiseaux du Djoudj), 1984–1994. *Malimbus* 20: 75–122.

SMALLEY, M.E. (1983) The Marsh Owl *Tyto capensis*: a wet season migrant to the Gambia. *Malimbus* 5: 31–33.

VELMALA, W. & GUSTAFSSON, R. (2003) Two new raptors for Nigeria and other raptor observations at Lake Chad. *Malimbus* 25: 52–55.

Received 23 February 2008
Revised 6 May 2008

Jan Riegert[1], Marcin Antczak[2] & Drahomíra Fainová[1]
[1]Univ. of South Bohemia, Faculty of Science, Dept of Zoology,
Branišovská 31, 370 05 České Budějovice, Czech Republic
[2]Adam Mickiewicz Univ., Dept of Behavioural Ecology,
Umultowska 89, PL-61 614 Poznań, Poland

On the occurrence of the Alpine Swift *Apus melba* in Nigeria

The Alpine Swift *Apus melba* is a not uncommon to rare Palaearctic winter visitor to W Africa (Keith *et al*. 1988), whose winter distribution is not adequately known in the region (Borrow & Demey 2001). For Nigeria, the known distribution extends only to about 7º N. However, there are two records from Cameroon, at 4–5º N, close to the Nigerian border (Borrow & Demey 2001). Here, we add four observations of large flocks of Alpine Swifts from the Cross River National Park, in SE Nigeria, suggesting that the species may regularly winter in this region. Observations were part of an ornithological survey in the Okwangwo Division of the Cross River NP, conducted in the surroundings of Bashu Okpambe village (*c*. 6º6´N, 9°8´E) from 1 to 26 Nov 2006.

Our observations are as follows (with minimum number of birds recorded): two flocks, of 40 and 30 birds, 16 Nov; 50 birds, 20 Nov; five birds, 24 Nov. The first and