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## ADDITIONAL NOTES ON BIRDS OF MID-WEST NIGERIA

by Sir Hugo J. Marshall

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Heigham's paper (1976) on the birds of Mid-West Nigeria is a valuable check-list for that area. Forty years ago my wife and I spent some five years in what was then the Benin Province, mostly north of the true forest in the Ishan and Kukuruku Divisions and the Agbor District, although we had 19 months in the Benin Division practically all of which was then forest. Then in the early fifties, we had occasion to make two or three extensive tours through the Mid-West including a journey down the Niger from the northern boundary to Asaba and several tours in the delta area.

These notes, which are intended as an addition to Heigham's paper, are based on our records made on those tours. Forty years ago very little was known of the birds of southern Nigeria and we ourselves were uninstructed amateurs. Our records, as we now realize, left much to be desired. As we identified each new bird it was allotted a page in the "Diary", each page of which was ruled with thirteen columns, the left hand column being for the year and the other twelve for the months. Several times each month we entered the birds we had seen, with locality and (usually) date but we only made one entry for each bird each month. From these records, which ultimately covered 24 years, a fair picture of temporal distribution of birds emerges for those areas of south-western Nigeria in which we were stationed or travelled: but it is not possible to assess in any detail the frequency of occurrence.

The list that follows is not a complete record of all the species we identified, but includes only those which are additional to Heigham's list (asterisked) and those about which we can provide some additional information. In the latter case only that information is included. For example, we recorded *Anhinga rufa* in the area in March, May, July, August and December but I have listed it for the last two of these months only as Heigham has already given it for the first three.

The additions to Heigham's Appendix are mainly accounted for by our having lived in a different part of the area. Our diaries give the names of the town or village near which we recorded the bird but these names would often mean nothing to a reader unfamiliar with the area and even to us convey less than they did. Therefore in the List the locality is given merely as a Division of the old Benin Province. The Kukuruku Division, with headquarters at Auchi, stretched right across the north of the Province, being bounded on the west by the Owo Division of the Ondo Province, on the

north by the Northern Provinces and on the east by the Niger. It is mainly derived savanna broken up by quite high hills and great inselbergs. There was a good deal of fringing forest on the hill-slopes and near the rivers and in these areas there was a fair sprinkling of oil-palms. To the south of Kukuruku and also running right across the Province was the Ishan Division with headquarters at Ubiaja. It was rather more thickly populated than Kukuruku, the north-western parts being derived savanna, the southern parts secondary forest, fairly extensively farmed. The Benin Division occupied the whole of the south-western part of the Province. It was almost entirely forest, there being very few places in the Division, except on one or two of the larger rivers, where one could see more than two or three hundred yards. It was thinly populated and comparatively little farmed. To the south it bordered on the inland creeks and to the south-east adjoined Heigham's Sapele area. The Agbor District of the Asaba Division was almost entirely farmland. It was much more thickly populated than any of the other Divisions and, though it had been forest in the not very distant past, very little true forest remained, the typical landscape being farms dotted with palm trees and the still-standing skeletons of forest trees burnt when the farms were cleared and fringed with secondary growth separating one farm from another. Agbor Station, however, was a wide open space surrounded by farms and it was here that we saw such birds as Burhinus senegalensis and Coracias garrulus.

It may be worth making mention of a few birds which we would have expected to see but did not, or saw only very rarely. Perhaps the most surprising was Passer griseus which we never recorded anywhere in the Benin Province. Lonchura cucullata, which Heigham records as common throughout the year round Sapele and which we found common enough further west, was recorded only twice in this area, while we saw Platysteira cyanea only once. Heigham suggests that Crinifer piscator is probably resident in savanna parts of the area but, to our surprise, here again we had but one record. He lists Tauraco macrorhynchus as being seen occasionally every month from January to September, except May, but, apparently, he saw T. persa only once. On the other hand we recorded T. persa with some regularity in the Benin forest, less often in Ishan, but never saw T. macrorhynchus. Similarly he lists Alcedo leucogaster as occasional throughout the year. We never saw it nor did Mason who spent some months living in the forest in north-west Benin. It is said to be a secretive bird and its much more frequent recording now may be due to mist-netting. We could in fact make quite a long list of forest birds which Heigham records with some regularity but which we never saw. It would be quite wrong to read into this a change in bird population; it is to be accounted for by our faulty powers of observation and the now much improved methods of studying forest birds.

## SUPPLEMENT TO 'ANNOTATED LIST OF BIRDS OBSERVED IN MID-WEST NIGERIA'

Names of the "Divisions" of the Benin Province as they existed in 1955 are abbreviated as

Ben (Benin Division)                      Ish (Ishan Division)  
Kuk (Kukuruku Division)              Agb (Agbor District of Asaba Division)

In the few references to the old Warri Province I have used the names of the nearest town shown on Heigham's map (1976 p. 77). Also -

R = river                      (N) = nesting                      (S) = specimen

| Species                          | Locality and month   |
|----------------------------------|--|
| <i>Podiceps ruficollis</i>       | Niger R at Illushi, 12 v 1955.                                   |
| <i>Anhinga rufa</i>              | Ben, Apr, Aug, Dec.  |
| <i>Ciconia episcopus</i>         | Ish, Mar; Ben, Feb.  |
| <i>Bostrychia hagedash</i>       | Kuk, Nov; Ben, July.   |
| * <i>Dendrocygna viduata</i>     | Niger R at Illushi, 12 v 1955.                                   |
| * <i>Plectropterus gambensis</i> | Niger R at Agenebode, 12 v 1955.                                 |
| * <i>Sarkidiornis melanotus</i>  | Niger R at Agenebode, 12 v 1955.                                 |
| <i>Neophron monachus</i>         | Ish, throughout the year.  |
| * <i>Circus macrourus</i>        | Ish/Kuk Jan, Mar; Agb, Jan.                                      |
| * <i>Accipiter erythropus</i>    | Ben, Sep (S), 1938.  |
| * <i>A. ovampensis</i>           | Ish, July (S), 1934.   |
| <i>A. badius</i>                 | Seen only twice, Kuk, Jan; Agb, Dec.                             |
| <i>Urotriorchis macrourus</i>    | Ish, Nov, 1934, Ben, Nov, 1938.                                  |
| <i>Lophoaetus occipitalis</i>    | Kuk, Apr, Nov.   |
| <i>Haliaetus vocifer</i>         | Niger R at Ebu, Nov, 1937; Kwale, Nov 1952.                      |
| <i>Pandion haliaetus</i>         | Ase R, Nov 1953; Niger R, Illushi, May, 1955.                    |
| <i>Falco cuvieri</i>             | Ish, March-June (N May); Agbor Jan.                              |
| <i>F. ardosiaceus</i>            | Agb, Jan, 1937.  |
| * <i>Francolinus achantensis</i> | Ish, July, 1937 (S)  |
| <i>Guttera edouardi</i>          | Ish, July, Sep; Ben Sep.   |
| * <i>Sarothrura elegans</i>      | Ish, Apr, 1935 (S).  |
| <i>Burhinus senegalensis</i>     | Agb, Jan, 1937. Two on Station for about ten days from the 10th. |
| * <i>Vanellus senegallus</i>     | Kuk, Jan, 1939.  |
| <i>Pluvialis squatarola</i>      | Escravos R, 16 iv 1954.  |
| <i>Charadrius hiaticula</i>      | Escravos R, 16 iv 1954.  |
| <i>C. forbesi</i>                | Ben, 19 iv 1938; Kwale Apr, 1954.                                |
| * <i>C. marginatus</i>           | Escravos R, 16 iv 1954.  |
| <i>Tringa hypoleucos</i>         | Niger R at Illushi, 12 v 1955.                                   |
| <i>Calidris minuta</i>           | Kwale 15 iv 1954.  |

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|-----------------------------------|--|
| <i>Pluvianus aegyptius</i>        | Ben, Dec.  |
| <i>Glareola cinerea</i>           | Niger R at Agenebode 12 v 1955; Kwale<br>15 iv 1954 (N).                 |
| <i>Rhynchops flavirostris</i>     | Niger R at Asaba, 13 v 1955.   |
| <i>Sterna tschegrava</i>          | Escravos R, 16 iv 1954.  |
| <i>S. albifrons</i>               | Kwale, 15 iv 1954.   |
| <i>Turtur brehmeri</i>            | Ben, Feb, Nov, Dec.  |
| <i>Agapornis pullaria</i>         | Ish, June, 1937.   |
| <i>Tauraco persa</i>              | Ben, Mar-June; Sep-Nov; Agb, Aug; Ish, Apr, May, July,<br>Aug, Oct, Nov. |
| <i>Crinifer piscator</i>          | Kuk, Jan, 1939. Our only record.   |
| <i>Corythaeola cristata</i>       | Ben, Feb, Apr, May, Nov; Ish Mar, Apr.                                   |
| <i>Cuculus solitarius</i>         | Ben, Jan-Mar, May, July-Sep, Nov.  |
| * <i>C. canorus</i>               | Agb, Jan, 1937; Ish, Apr, 1937.  |
| <i>Macrodipteryx longipennis</i>  | Ben, Feb (N).  |
| <i>Ceryle maxima</i>              | Kuk, Jan; Ben, Feb-July, Nov, Dec.                                       |
| <i>Halcyon malimbica</i>          | Ish, Feb (S).  |
| <i>H. badia</i>                   | Ben, Feb, July.  |
| * <i>H. chelicuti</i>             | Ish, every month except Sept.  |
| <i>H. leucocephala</i>            | Ish/Ben, Nov.  |
| * <i>Merops apiaster</i>          | Forcados, 8 xi 1952.   |
| <i>M. albicollis</i>              | Ish/Ben, Oct, earliest 18th.   |
| <i>M. pusillus</i>                | Ben, 24 vii 1939; Ish, Oct, Nov.   |
| <i>M. gularis</i>                 | Ish/Ben, every month except Sept.  |
| <i>Coracias garrulus</i>          | Agb, Jan, 1937; Forcados 8 xi 1952.                                      |
| * <i>C. abyssinica</i>            | Agb, Jan, 1937.  |
| <i>C. cyanogaster</i>             | Kuk, Aug, 1936.  |
| <i>Eurystomus glaucurus</i>       | Ish, June, Sep.  |
| <i>E. gularis</i>                 | Ben, Apr, May.   |
| * <i>Upupa epops</i>              | Ish, 11 ii 1937.   |
| <i>Phoeniculus bollei</i>         | Ish, Jan, Feb, Aug, Oct; Ben, Mar, Apr.                                  |
| * <i>P. aterrimus</i>             | Ish, 26 x 1952.  |
| <i>Tockus nasutus</i>             | Kuk, Jan, 1939. Our only record.   |
| <i>Ceratogymna elata</i>          | Ben, Mar, Apr, Jul.  |
| <i>C. atrata</i>                  | Ben, all months except Jan, Aug, Sep.                                    |
| <i>Bycanistes cylindricus</i>     | Ish, Mar, Oct, Ben, Mar.   |
| * <i>B. subcylindricus</i>        | Ben, Feb, Mar (S), Nov, Dec.   |
| * <i>Lybius vieilloti</i>         | Kuk, Jan; Ish, Feb, Mar, Aug, Nov.                                       |
| <i>Pogoniulus scolopaceus</i>     | Ben, Mar (N).  |
| <i>P. subsulphureus</i>           | Ben, May, Jul; Ish, Sep.   |
| <i>Trachyphonus purpuratus</i>    | Ben, Jan (N).  |
| <i>Prodotiscus insignis</i>       | Ben, 10 vi 1938.   |
| * <i>Camptothera punctuligera</i> | Ish, Feb (S), Mar; Kuk, Jan.   |
| <i>C. cailliautii</i>             | Ish, Feb, Aug, Dec; Ben, Apr.  |
| <i>Dendropicos obsoletus</i>      | Kuk, Dec (S).  |
| * <i>Smithornis rufolateralis</i> | Ish, May; Ben Mar-May, July, Oct, Nov.                                   |
| * <i>Mirafra rufocinnamomea</i>   | Kuk, Jan, Apr, July, Aug.  |
| <i>Hirundo nigrita</i>            | Osse R, Feb (N), 1939.   |
| <i>H. aethiopica</i>              | Ben, Aug (N), 1938.  |
| * <i>H. leucosoma</i>             | Kuk, Jan, 1939.  |
| <i>H. abyssinica</i>              | Kwale, Apr; Kuk, July.   |

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|---------------------------------------|--|
| <i>Macronyx croceus</i>               | Kuk, Jan, Jul.                                   |
| <i>Dryocopus gambensis</i>            | Ish, May (S).                                    |
| <i>Tchagra senegala</i>               | Ish, Feb; Kuk, Jan, Aug.                         |
| <i>Laniarius ferrugineus</i>          | Ish, Mar, Apr, Jun, Sep, Dec.                    |
| <i>Malaconotus sulfureopectus</i>     | Ish, Mar, Apr (S), Jul, Aug.                     |
| * <i>Lanius gubernator</i>            | Kuk, July (S), Aug.                              |
| <i>Oriolus nigripennis</i>            | Agb, Mar; Ish, May (S).                          |
| * <i>Dicrurus atripennis</i>          | Ben, Mar, 1939.                                  |
| * <i>Peoptera lugubris</i>            | Ben, Nov, 1938.                                  |
| * <i>Lamprotornis purpurea</i>        | Kuk, Jan, 1939.                                  |
| <i>Cinnyricinclus leucogaster</i>     | Ish, Apr (N).                                    |
| <i>Corvus albus</i>                   | Ish, all months except Sep, Oct, Dec.            |
| <i>Coracina azurea</i>                | Ben, Apr.  |
| <i>Campephaga phoenicea</i>           | Ish, Mar.  |
| <i>Andropadus gracilirostris</i>      | Ben, Apr.  |
| * <i>Baeopogon indicator</i>          | Ish, Jan, Feb (S); Warri, Apr, 1954.             |
| <i>Bleda canicapilla</i>              | Ish, Aug.  |
| <i>Nicator chloris</i>                | Ish, Mar, Ben, Mar-Jun, Nov, Dec; Agb, June (S). |
| <i>Mymecocichla cinnamomeiventris</i> | Kuk, Jan, Aug, Nov.                              |
| <i>M. albifrons</i>                   | Ish, Feb, Nov.                                   |
| <i>Neocossyphus poensis</i>           | Mason's specimen obtained Dec.                   |
| * <i>Trichastoma rufipennis</i>       | Ben, Dec, 1938.                                  |
| <i>Sphenoeacus mentalis</i>           | Kuk, Jan, 1939 (S).                              |
| <i>Cisticola natalensis</i>           | Kuk, Jan, 1939, (S).                             |
| * <i>Hypergerus atriceps</i>          | Kuk, Jan, 1939.                                  |
| <i>Muscapa striata</i>                | Ish, Jan-Mar; Agb, Nov.                          |
| <i>M. cassini</i>                     | Ben, all months except Jan, Aug, Sep.            |
| <i>Artonyias fuliginosa</i>           | Ben, May, 1938 (N).                              |
| <i>Fraseria cinerascens</i>           | Ben, Mar-May, Dec.                               |
| * <i>Melaenomis edolioides</i>        | Kuk, Jan, 1939; Ish, 26 x 1952.                  |
| * <i>Bradornis pallidus</i>           | Kuk, Jan, Apr, Dec; Ish, July (S); Ben, Oct.     |
| <i>Bias musicus</i>                   | Ish, Feb (S); Ben, Mar.                          |
| <i>Platysteira cyanea</i>             | Seen only once, in Ish, Mar, 1935.               |
| <i>Trochocercus longicauda</i>        | Ish, Feb, Mar, May, Aug, Sep, Nov, Dec.          |
| <i>Parus leucomelas</i>               | Ish, Mar, Dec; Kuk, Jan, Aug.                    |
| * <i>Salpormis spilonota</i>          | Ish, Feb, 1937, Mar, 1935; Kuk, Apr, 1938.       |
| <i>Nectarinia venusta</i>             | Kuk, Jan, 1939 (S).                              |
| <i>N. cuprea</i>                      | Kuk, Jan, 1939 (S).                              |
| * <i>N. coccinigaster</i>             | Ish, Feb-May, Aug, Sep (N), Oct, Dec; Kuk, Jan.  |
| <i>Zosterops senegalensis</i>         | Kuk, Jan, Ish, Feb, Mar, Dec.                    |
| <i>Emberiza cabanisi</i>              | Kuk, Apr, 1938.                                  |
| <i>Amblyospiza albifrons</i>          | Ish, Oct; Asaba, Nov.                            |
| <i>Ploceus superciliosus</i>          | Observed and collected at Igara Jan, 1939.       |
| <i>Malimbus scutatus</i>              | Ish, May, Sep (N); Agb, Nov.                     |
| <i>M. rubricollis</i>                 | Ben, Mar, Apr, (N).                              |
| <i>Euplectes hordeaceus</i>           | Ish, Aug, Oct.                                   |
| <i>E. macrourus</i>                   | Ish, in breeding dress June-Nov.                 |
| <i>Nigrita luteifrons</i>             | Warri, 13 ix 1954.                               |
| * <i>Lagnosticta rufopicta</i>        | Kuk, Jan, July, Aug, Nov.                        |
| <i>Lonchura cucullata</i>             | Ish, May, Aug, the only two sightings.           |