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FOODS OF SOME CAMEROONIAN BIRDS - The following records were made in Cameroon during 1974-75 at the sites described on page 133 Site numbers (see map, page 134) are in parenthesis after the dates.

Polyboroides radiatus - December 74 (7), nuts of oil palm (Elaeis guineensis).
Milvus migrans - May 74 (1), live mouse; April 74 (2), carcass of guinea fowl.
Numida meleagris - July 75 (1), swarming termites.
Treron waalia - July 75 (1), Celtis interifolia fruit; May 75 (4), Ficus sp. fruit.
Poicephalus senegalus - July 74 and May 75 (4), Lannea sp. fruit; January 75 (4), Combretum paniculatum flowers.
Psittacus erithacus - October 74 (7), Dacryodes edulis fruit; December 74 (7), nuts of oil palm (Elaeis guineensis).
Musophaga violacea - February 75 (4), Combretum sp. seed; April 75 (4), Ficus fruit.
Crinifer piscator - July 75 (4), Lannea fruit.
Corythaeola cristata - December 74 (7), Canthium fruit.
Tockus erythrorhynchus - March 75 (1), steadily worked an area of woodland floor, turning aside dry grass, wood, elephant boli, etc. to harvest invertebrates.
Lybius dubius - February 75 (4), Diospyros mesipiliformis fruit.
L. leucocephalus - March 75 (1), Ficus fruit.
Cinnyricinculus leucogaster - July 74 (4), Lannea fruit.
Ptilostomus afer - June 75 (4), termites in thin, earth tunnels on a tree-trunk.
Pycnonotus barbatus - July 75 (1), Boscia senegalensis fruit; February 75 (4), Celtis interifolia flowers; November 74 (7), Ficus fruit.
Ixonotus guttatus - December 74 (7), Ficus fruit.
Anthreptes collaris - October 74 (7), a female feeding on caterpillars shook each one against a branch before eating it.

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HARASSMENT OF MONKEYS BY CAMEROONIAN BIRDS - During studies of the Green Monkey Cercopithecus aethiops tantalus in le Parc National de la Benoue (see pp. 133f.), three species of birds were observed to make diving attacks on the monkeys.

Throughout the latter part of April and early May 1975, drongos Dicrurus adsimilis frequently made diving attacks when the monkeys were walking or foraging in open woodland. These attacks were always accompanied by harsh cries, and the birds occasionally struck the monkeys on the head or shoulders. The monkeys sometimes flinched, but otherwise paid little attention to the attacks. So characteristic was the drongos' reaction to the monkeys, that I often used their cries to locate my study group. On one occasion, a female monkey that had wandered away from the main body of the group did likewise when she appeared to be alerted by the cries of the drongos. She climbed onto a termite mound, looked in their direction and then headed off towards the other monkeys.

On several occasions in April, in one particular area of the open woodland, the monkeys were dived at by one, or sometimes two, small hawks (Accipiter sp., probably A. badius). The hawks usually just missed the monkeys, but once an adult male that was in a low tree was struck on the back of the head. The male left the tree and cantered away. On almost all occasions the monkeys retreated from the hawks, and they often squealed as they did so.

Once in May, several monkeys and three Bruce's Green Pigeons Treron waalia were harvesting figs in a small tree (Ficus sp.) in open woodland. One pigeon flew up from the tree, then turned and dived at the monkeys which dropped to the ground uttering squeals and the harsh vocalisations that were normally associated with disputes between them. The pigeons remained in the tree and the monkeys moved on. On other occasions, the monkeys lunged at or chased pigeons (species not identified), but only once was a bird caught and then it struggled free from the hand of the juvenile that had grabbed it.

The behaviour of both the drongos and the hawks can be explained as nest defence. Both species were probably breeding when the attacks occurred and Green Monkeys are known to eat eggs (McGuire 1974, Skinner & Skinner 1974), probably including those of the drongo (Struhsaker 1967). They also eat chicks (Struhsaker, loc. cit.) and small, unidentified birds (pers. obs.). Furthermore, the hawks' attacks were confined to a particular area which may have been near to a nest. In both east and south Africa, drongos have been observed harassing Green Monkeys that were actually raiding nests (Struhsaker, loc. cit., Skinner & Skinner, loc. cit.). During October 1975 I witnessed a similar diving attack (without contact) being made repeatedly upon a large monitor (Varanus sp.) that was swimming in flooded grassland in le Parc National de la Kalamaloue (see page 95). On this occasion, the attacker was an adult male weaver Ploceus melanocephalus in breeding plumage. Since many nests of this weaver hung from grass stems only a foot or two above the water, the anti-predator hypothesis probably applies here too. In the case of the pigeons, the attack can be explained in terms of competition for food: both the hawks and the pigeons caused the monkeys to retreat, and although the same could not be demonstrated for the drongos, their victims may well have responded by moving through an area faster than they would otherwise have done.

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References

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