



**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.  
If you want to print this pdf, we suggest you begin on the next page (2) to conserve paper.

**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.  
Si vous souhaitez imprimer ce pdf, nous vous suggérons de commencer par la page suivante  
(2) pour économiser du papier.

THE STATUS OF SOME NORTHERN GUINEA SAVANNA BIRDS IN  
MOLE NATIONAL PARK, GHANA

by I. R. Taylor and M. A. Macdonald

Received 29 July 1977

A list of birds recorded at Mole National Park has been compiled by Greig-Smith (1976) and observations on the migratory status of a number of the species have been published by the same author (Greig-Smith 1977). In this note we add a number of new species to the area and comment on the status of several others. One of us (I.R.T.) spent three months at Mole in the wet season of 1969, initiated the training of park staff in bird identification, and introduced the regular censuses which formed the basis of Greig-Smith's conclusions on migratory status. Both of us visited the Park at the end of the dry season in April 1976 before the first rains, and we spent about 50 hours mist-netting and observing in the field, covering all the major habitats within the reserve. There is no other published information for the area during the late dry season. Many of our conclusions on the migratory status of the birds differ from Greig-Smith's, because of his paucity of data for the late dry season.

ADDITIONS TO THE PARK LIST

BLACK KITE Milvus migrans One on 5 April with a very pale head and black bill was probably the Palaearctic race M. m. migrans.

LANNER FALCON Falco biarmicus One on 9 April.

HOBBY F. subbuteo One seen very well on 6 April.

PAINTED SNIPE Rostratula benghalensis A male caught on 8 April and two seen on 9 April.

ROSE-GREY DOVE Streptopelia rosogrisea Two seen well on 5 April.

EUROPEAN ROLLER Coracias garrulus One on 6 April.

HOOPOE Upupa epops At least one bird in a group of six seen on 7 April had the white subterminal bars on the crest characteristic of the Palaearctic U. e. epops (the occurrence of which was queried by Greig-Smith 1977).

AFRICAN SAND MARTIN Riparia paludicola Three seen on 3 and one on 4 April.

GREY-RUMPED SWALLOW Hirundo griseopyga A few scattered flocks, probably 50-100 individuals in all. One bird mist-netted. Recorded between 4 and 9 April. This also seems to be the first published record for the species in Ghana.

RED-THROATED PIPIT Anthus cervinus Two seen and heard flying over on 5 April.

ICTERINE WARBLER Hippolais icterina One Hippolais warbler seen well on the 4 of April was almost certainly this species.

GREY-BACKED EREMOMELA Eremomela icteropygialis Single birds seen on 3 and 4 April.

SPOTTED FLYCATCHER Muscicapa striata Two birds seen on the 7 and 8 April had the small size and faint streaking on the head and breast characteristic of the African race, M. s. gambagae.

#### MIGRATION OF ETHIOPIAN SPECIES

SPUR-WINGED GOOSE Plectropterus gambensis This species was seen regularly in small numbers in the wet season but not at all at the end of the dry season, suggesting possible migration.

STONE-PARTRIDGE Ptilopachus petrosus Greig-Smith gave this as a resident species and in Nigeria Elgood, Fry and Dowsett (1973) could find no evidence for movements. We did not record any at the end of the dry season although they were common in small groups in the wet season, suggesting the possibility of at least a local movement.

VINACEOUS DOVE Streptopelia vinacea Elgood et al. could not find conclusive evidence for migration in Nigeria. We confirm the dry season influx noted by Greig-Smith. The species was not common in the park during the wet season but was probably the commonest species during the dry season. At the beginning of April we noted vast flocks starting at about 100 km south of the park (8°30'N).

MOURNING DOVE Streptopelia decipiens This is a rather uncommon species in the wet season but we failed to find any at the end of the dry season. More intensive observations might show the species to be migratory, although Elgood et al. could find no evidence of migration in Nigeria.

RED-BILLED WOOD DOVE Turtur afer Seen in small numbers in the wet season but not seen late in the dry season. In southern Ghana this species prefers wetter habitats than its congener T. abyssinicus, and it is probable that it moves south as the dry season progresses.

**PIGMY KINGFISHER** Ceyx picta Classed by Greig-Smith as resident. It was common in the wet season but we did not see it at the end of the dry season. Around Accra in the dry season one of us has observed an influx of this species into gardens and parklands, probably from the adjacent savanna of the Accra plains. It seems likely that the Mole birds move south in the late dry season, possibly even into the north of the forest zone. In at least one forest just south of the forest/savanna boundary we have data that suggest a slight influx of the species near the end of the dry season. There seems to be no previous evidence for movements of this species in West Africa, although it is migrant elsewhere (Benson 1964).

**SENEGAL WOOD-HOOPOE** Phoeniculus purpureus Seen nearly every day in small numbers during the wet season, but at the end of the dry season we saw only two during our entire stay. Greig-Smith described it as resident but evidently there must be a considerable movement south during the late dry season.

**LESSER WOOD-HOOPOE** Phoeniculus aterrimus We did not record this species at the end of the dry season although it was seen regularly in small numbers in the wet season. There might be a southward movement in the dry season, supporting the tentative conclusions reached by Elgood et al.

**BLACK-THROATED HONEY-GUIDE** Indicator indicator Greig-Smith did not give this as a migrant species. Small numbers were seen regularly in the wet season but none at the end of the dry season. It being conspicuous and not easily overlooked, we conclude that it must be migratory.

**FLAPPET LARK** Mirafra rufocinnamomea Greig-Smith described an apparent increase in numbers in the wet season but suggested that this might simply be a result of increased conspicuousness due to display flights. This species was recorded regularly during the wet season but not at the end of the dry season. One of us is familiar with this species in southern Ghana and has seen and flushed birds from grasslands outside the breeding season. We believe the apparent absence of birds in Mole late in the dry season to be real and that the species is at least partly migratory.

**AFRICAN SAND MARTIN** Riparia paludicola This species has not been recorded in the wet season and the four birds seen by us might represent a slight southward movement from more arid areas late in the dry season. Elgood et al. suggest that in Nigeria it is probably a migrant.

**GREY-RUMPED SWALLOW** Hirundo griseopyga The movements of this species in Africa are very poorly understood. We found it fairly common at the end of the dry season at Mole, when it has never been recorded in the wet season. We also have an observation of a strong north-west passage of this species with three other species of swallow at Asutsuare (06°03'N 00°16'W) in South-east Ghana on 29 January 1977. These observations suggest that the species moves into Ghana during the dry season, but whether it is a regular migrant or an irregular nomad we cannot say.

**LONG-CRESTED HELMET-SHRIKE** Priocops plumata Greig-Smith gave this as a partial migrant. We failed to record any of this very conspicuous and

noisy species at the end of the dry season and we conclude that at this time the entire population moves south. In the parklands of the Accra area this species occurs most frequently during the late dry season, the birds probably having moved in from the adjacent savanna.

**BRUBRU SHRIKE** *Nilaus afer* Given by Greig-Smith as resident. Although it was seen in small numbers in the wet season we failed to find any at the end of the dry season, suggesting at least some degree of movement.

**SNOWY-CROWNED ROBIN-CHAT** *Cossypha niveicapilla* Fairly common in the riverine forests during the wet season, but none was seen at the end of the dry season. It is therefore probably migratory and not resident as suggested by Greig-Smith. Elgood et al. concluded there was a northward spread in the wet season in Nigeria. The very similar congener, *C. albicapilla*, was seen regularly in riverine forests at the end of the dry season and thus probably differs by being non-migratory.

**GREY-BACKED EREMOMELA** *Eremomela icteropygialis* The two birds seen by us might represent a slight southward movement into Mole from more arid areas during the late dry season.

**PALE FLYCATCHER** *Bradornis pallidus* Described by Greig-Smith as resident. We did not see any at the end of the dry season and it is therefore probably migratory with possibly only a short absence.

**BLUE FAIRY FLYCATCHER** *Trochocercus longicauda* Greig-Smith stated that this species was totally absent at the end of the dry season. Since the dry season normally ends sometime in April, and since he stated that no counts were made in either March or April, we find it difficult to understand how that conclusion was reached. We found it only slightly less abundant at the end of the dry season than in the wet season, and the difference can probably be accounted for by recruitment through breeding. Greig-Smith suggested that the species might move into deeper, less dry, forest in the late dry season but that cannot be so, as our observations were made in exactly the same stretches of forest as the observations he analysed. Elgood et al. found no evidence for movements in Nigeria.

**PENDULINE TIT** *Remiz parvulus* Fairly common during the wet season but not recorded at the end of the dry season.

**SPOTTED CREEPER** *Salpornis spinolota* This is a rare species and during the wet season was seen only occasionally. We would have expected to see at least a small number at the end of the dry season, considering the number of hours spent in the field, but we failed to do so. It is possible that the species moves south during the late dry season.

**NIGERIAN LITTLE BUNTING** *Emberiza forbesi* A common species in the wet season but apparently absent at the end of the dry season. Again Elgood et al. gave no evidence of movements in Nigeria.

SENEGAL FIREFINCH Lagonosticta senegala This was a common species in the wet season but was not seen at all at the end of the dry season. The species is known to be migratory in N.E. Nigeria (Jones and Ward, 1977).

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We thank the Ghana Department of Game and Wildlife for permission to study birds at Mole. The work done in 1969 was partly financed by a grant from the Carnegie Trust.

#### REFERENCES

- Benson, C. W. (1964) Some intra-African migratory birds. Puku 2: 53-66
- Elgood, J. H., Fry, C. H. and Dowsett, R. J. (1973) African migrants in Nigeria. Ibis 115: 1-45 and 375-411
- Jones, P. J. and Ward, P. (1977) Evidence of pre-migratory fattening in three tropical granivorous birds. Ibis 119: 200-203
- Greig-Smith, P. W. (1976) The composition and habitat preferences of the avifauna of Mole National Park, Ghana. Bull. Nigerian Orn. Soc. 12: 49-66
- Greig-Smith, P. W. (1977) Bird migration at Mole National Park, Ghana. Bull. Nigerian Orn. Soc. 13: 3-14



I. R. Taylor, Zoology Department, University of Ghana, Legon, Ghana  
(present address - Dept. Forestry and Natural Resources, Univ. of  
Edinburgh, King's Buildings, Edinburgh)

M. A. Macdonald, Zoology Department, University of Cape Coast, Cape  
Coast, Ghana