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THE BIRDS OF BIA NATIONAL PARK, GHANA

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

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In May 1974, 306 km² of primary moist evergreen forest in Western Ghana was established as a National Park, thus protecting one of the few large areas of unexploited high forest in the country. The Park lies at the south-west corner of the Southern Ashanti Uplands, an extensive low plateau at 150-300 m a.s.l., with a rainfall of 165-180 cm p.a.

The major conservation interest in Bia National Park concerned the mammals (including Chimpanzee Pan troglodytes, Forest Elephant Loxodonta africana cyclotis, and Bongo Boocercus eurycerus), but with the remaining primary forest in West Africa being exploited at an alarming rate the Park will probably become an important refuge for specialised forest birds. The continued existence of the Park is, however, by no means secure. Already (in April 1977) the southern part of the forest has been opened for timber operations, and the area of the Park has been reduced to 78 km². Even this remnant may not be safe for very long.

As part of a wider study of forest bird ecology, we visited Bia between 4 and 11 April 1977. All our observations were made at the northern end of the Park (6° 38' N, 3° 08' W), principally in primary forest but also in secondary and edge habitat resulting from human interference.

In view of the scarcity of information on species composition in West African primary forest, a briefly annotated list of the species we observed seems valuable. Ecological data collected during our visit will be published elsewhere.

Systematic list

- Neophron monachus Two and four soaring over a clearing.
Gypohierax angolensis One and two soaring over a clearing.
Polyboroides radiatus One over primary forest and regularly seen over clearing.
Urotriorchis macrourus One flying from secondary to primary forest on morning of 9th, and in secondary and edge trees on evening of 10th.
Accipiter toussenelii One over clearing in display flight.
Buteo auguralis Two soaring and in secondary growth.
Stephanoaetus coronatus One over primary forest.
Hieraetus dubius One soaring with P. apivorus on 5th; one over primary forest on 6th.

- Milvus migrans One and two birds soaring over clearing.
- Pernis apivorus Two soaring over secondary growth.
- (Aviceda cuculoides) One probable in secondary growth, on 8th.)
- Fringilla lathami Two in primary forest.
- Guttera edouardi Feathers found in primary forest.
- Sarothrura pulchra Twice heard in secondary growth.
- Columba unicincta One singing in primary forest on 6th; one singing and performing flight display in clearing on 8th; two flying over clearing towards primary forest on morning of 9th.
- Turtur brehmeri Singles flushed in primary forest three times, and one flying through secondary growth towards primary forest.
- Treron australis Common in secondary growths where it was especially obvious in morning and evening. Only one group in primary forest.
- Psittacus erithacus Regular in twos and threes in secondary growth. Two in primary forest.
- Poicephalus gullelmi Very obvious in secondary growth in morning and evening in flocks of up to 30. Definite evening flights from clearings towards primary forest.
- Agapornis swindemiana Ten over clearing on evening of 7th; six in primary forest on 8th; five and seven in secondary growth on 9th (Macdonald & Taylor 1977).
- Turacus macrorhynchus Apparently uncommon, calls heard from secondary growth on most mornings and once in primary forest.
- Corythaecola cristata Apparently not common, calls of one or two groups heard in primary forest each day. Two seen at Camp 1 on 6th.
- Cuculus canorus One over clearing. Race not known, but habitat and occurrence of other Palaearctic migrants that day makes C. c. canorus not unlikely.
- C. solitarius Song heard from secondary growth every day; three times in primary forest.
- C. clamorosus Heard once in primary forest and twice in secondary growth.
- Chrysococcyx cupreus Song heard twice in primary forest and once in secondary growth. All single birds.
- C. klaas Regular song heard each day in primary and secondary habitats.
- C. caprius One singing in clearing on 10th.
- Ceuthmochares aereus Common in primary and secondary growth.
- Centropus leucogaster Calls heard in secondary growth most mornings; one heard in primary forest on 8th.
- Apus apus Small numbers over clearing and primary forest 5th-7th and 10th; very numerous 8th-9th.
- Cypsiurus parvus One on edge of forest.
- Chaetura sabini The commonest of the spinetails. Moderate numbers in clearing each day, and over primary forest on 5th and 7th.
- C. melanopygia Up to four over clearing, on 5th and 7th-10th; three over primary edge on 10th (Macdonald & Taylor 1977).
- C. cassini Up to three over clearing, 4th-10th.
- Halcyon senegalensis A pair resident and singing in clearing.
- H. malimbica One seen in primary forest.
- H. badia A few songs heard daily in primary forest and twice from camp clearing.
- Merops albicollis Common in wandering flocks in primary and secondary habitats.

- Eurystomus gularis Once seen in primary forest and up to five at a time in secondary forest and clearings.
- Phoeniculus bollei Up to two in secondary growth on three occasions.
- Tockus camurus One group heard in primary forest.
- T. fasciatus Fairly common in secondary growth; found in primary forest three times.
- Tropicranus albocristatus Two in secondary growth and one in primary forest.
- Ceratogymna elata Recorded each day in primary forest and once in secondary growth.
- C. atrata Up to four regularly in secondary forest and recorded in primary forest. Much commoner than C. elata.
- Bycanistes fistulator Up to four daily in secondary growth.
- B. cylindricus Up to three in secondary growth three times. Calls probably of this species once heard in primary forest.
- Lybius hirsutus Up to two in clearing on three dates and in primary forest on four.
- Gymnobucco calvus Frequent in secondary forest; groups recorded three times in primary forest.
- Buccanodon duchailui One singing in secondary growth on 9th and 10th.
- Pogoniulus scolopaceus Frequent song and occasional sightings in both primary and secondary growth. Apparently common.
- P. subsulphureus Up to two daily in clearing.
- Trachyphonus purpuratus One singing in secondary growth on two dates and in primary forest on three.
- Indicator maculatus Two together in canopy of primary forest on 8th.
- Campethera nivosa One in primary forest on 9th.
- C. maculosa One in primary forest on 10th.
- Mesopicos pyrrhogaster Up to two occasionally in secondary growth; two in primary forest.
- Hirundo rustica Influx on 8th after overnight rain, and present from then to 11th.
- H. abyssinica Two over clearing on 5th.
- Delichon urbica One over clearing on 8th.
- Prionops caniceps Two in primary forest on 8th.
- Dryoscopus sabinii Fairly common in primary forest; recorded also in secondary growth.
- Oriolus brachyrhynchus One seen (with 2 unidentified orioles) in primary forest.
- O. nigripennis Seen in primary forest four times and in secondary growth twice; pair resident in camp clearing.
- Dicurus adsimilis Frequent in both primary and secondary growth.
- Onychognathus fulgidus Three in primary forest and up to five in secondary growth.
- Lamprotornis cupreocauda Singles and small groups recorded in primary forest.
- Corvus albus Three over clearing.
- Coracina azurea Frequent in both primary and secondary growth.
- Pycnonotus barbatus Two in clearing.
- Andropadus curvirostris Single birds twice in primary forest and once in secondary growth.

- A. gracilis Fairly common in both primary and secondary growth.
- A. gracilirostris Frequently recorded in both primary and secondary growth.
- A. virens Two in secondary growth.
- A. latirostris Two single birds in primary and secondary growth.
- Ixonotus guttatus Groups recorded twice in primary forest.
- Baeopogon indicator One on 5th and three on 9th over clearing.
- Thesolocichla leucopleura Two groups heard, one in primary and one in secondary growth.
- Phyllastrephus albigularis Twice recorded in mixed-species flocks in primary forest.
- P. icterinus Up to ten twice recorded in primary forest.
- Calyptocichla serina Two in secondary growth, twice.
- Bleda syndactyla Several in bird-army in primary forest on 7th; calls thought to be this species heard frequently.
- B. eximia One in secondary growth.
- B. canicapilla Frequent in primary forest; twice recorded in secondary growth.
- Criniger barbatus Up to seven each day in primary forest.
- C. calurus Four in secondary growth and at least one in primary forest, all on 5th.
- Nicator chloris A few songs heard in primary and secondary growth on four days.
- Saxicola rubetra One in camp clearing on morning of 8th.
- Alethe diademata Found in primary forest on four days and in secondary growth on one.
- Neocossyphus poensis Up to two in primary forest on three days.
- Stizorhina fraseri Two in primary forest on 10th.
- Luscinia megarhynchos One in camp clearing on 7th.
- Trichastoma cleaveri Calls identified later by Dr C. Chappuis, heard frequently in primary forest.
- Phylloscopus sibilatrix Up to two in clearing on three days.
- Apalis sharpei Pair with young on 7th, singles on 8th and 10th in primary forest (Macdonald & Taylor 1977).
- Camaroptera superciliaris One in secondary growth.
- C. chloronota One singing in clearing on two days.
- C. brachyura One at camp on two days.
- Eremomela badiiceps A group in primary forest on three days and two groups in secondary growth on one.
- Sylvietta virens One in secondary growth on 5th.
- S. denti One in primary forest and three in secondary growth.
- Macrosphenus flavicans One in primary forest.
- M. concolor Frequent in primary forest, recorded in secondary growth.
- Hylia prasina Common in primary and secondary growth.
- Pholidornis rushiae One nest-building in primary forest on 10th.
- Parisoma griseigularis Two records of pairs, in primary forest on 7th and 10th.
- Muscicapa comitata Four in secondary growth on 9th.
- Artomyias ussheri Four on 8th and one on 9th in clearing.
- Fraseria ocreata At least five in primary forest on 7th and two on 10th; one in secondary growth on 5th and two on 9th.

- Hyliota violacea Two males on 5th, a pair on 9th on edge of clearing (Macdonald & Taylor 1977).
- Platysteira castanea Regular in mixed parties in primary forest; two in secondary growth.
- Erythrocerous mccallii Five groups in primary forest and one in secondary growth.
- Trochocercus nitens Two, one and one seen in primary forest.
- T. nigromitratus One, four and one seen in primary forest (Macdonald & Taylor 1977).
- Terpsiphone rufiventer Small numbers recorded each day in primary forest, but over 12 in one group on 7th.
- Antheptes fraseri Common in primary forest and also recorded in secondary growth.
- A. collaris Frequent in secondary growth; recorded in primary forest on three days.
- Nectarinia olivacea Fairly common in primary and secondary forest and bush.
- N. adelberti One in clearing on 8th.
- N. chloropygia Twice recorded in secondary growth and two in primary forest on 7th.
- N. superba Pair in clearing.
- Ploceus preussi Up to two in clearing.
- P. tricolor Up to three in primary forest and two in secondary growth.
- Malimbus scutatus One on 6th and several on 10th in primary forest.
- N. nitens One or two each day in primary forest.
- M. rubricollis One or two in primary forest on three dates; up to three around clearing most days.
- M. malimbicus Two and three in primary forest.
- Nigrita canicapilla Several singing birds recorded daily in primary forest; also in secondary growth.
- N. bicolor One in primary and one in secondary growth.
- N. fusconota Singing birds heard twice in primary forest and seen twice in clearing.
- Spermophaga haematina One in primary forest.

The total number of species recorded during the week was 132. Of these 31 were recorded only in primary forest, 41 only in secondary forest and clearings, and 60 in both habitats. For individual species the distribution of records in primary and secondary habitats should not be taken as typical for the species in Ghana, as most species were recorded so rarely during our visit.

The above list will certainly not be a complete list for the park. We have no records of owls (Strigidae) or nightjars (Caprimulgidae) and some of the forest undergrowth birds such as Trichastoma spp. and some Turdinae were probably missed. In a preliminary list for the Park, M. Rucks (unpublished) recorded Ceyx lecontei, Cossypha cyanocampter, Stiphromis erythrothorax, Cercotrichas leucosticta and Mandingoa nitidula (all netted) in addition to acceptable sight-records for other species that we failed

to record (Pteronetta hartlaubi, Lophoastus occipitalis, Alcedo leucogaster, Merops gularis, Tockus hartlaubi and Bycanistes subcylindricus). The total list is likely to be at least 160 species.

Reference

Macdonald, M. A. & Taylor, I. R. (1977) Notes on some uncommon forest birds in Ghana. Bull. Br. Orn. Cl. 97: 116-120

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