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NOTES ON BIRDS SEEN IN GHANA IN 1964

R.W.W. Sutton

(Continued from p. 62).

III : BIRDS NOTED ON A 1,500 MILE TOUR OF GHANA

My first stop was at Walewale (10° 25' N, 0° 55' W.), 70 miles north of Tamale. This is a well-wooded area, with some open places and cultivated fields. I was there on 17th-18th March and 21st-22nd March and made the following notes on the birds:

Swallow-tailed kite Chelictinia riocourii Up to six seen. One that was sitting on a tree was absurdly tame, and would not fly till a piece of earth I threw hit the branch on which it was sitting.

Grasshopper Buzzard Butastur rufipennis Very common and conspicuous, perching right out in the open. I saw this species everywhere in the North.

Lizard Buzzard Kaupifalco monogrammicus Frequent.

White-throated Francolin Francolinus albogularis Observed closely in the evening on a bare, cultivated field.

Nanaqua Dove Oena capensis Quite common, esp. in the more open areas.

Yellow-bellied Fruit Pigeon Vinago waalia Plentiful.

Yellow-billed Cuckoo Cuculus gularis Frequently heard.

Abyssinian Roller Coracias abyssinica One of the commonest birds in the North.

Hoopoe Upupa sp. Seen in dense woodland

Lesser Wood-hoopoe Scoptelus aterrimus Two seen in well-wooded area, in addition to Guinea Wood-Hoopoes Phoeniculus erythrorhynchus.

Carmine Bee-eater Merops nubicus Odd individuals seen in wooded areas.

Fine-spotted Woodpecker Campothera punctuligera 1 flushed from the ground in woods.

Long-crested helmet shrike Prionops plumata Especially common here, though I frequently saw it elsewhere in the North.

Brubru shrike Nilaus after 1 pair seen.

African Golden Oriole Oriolus auratus Common wherever there were plenty trees.

Yellow White-eye Zosterops senegalensis 1 pair seen.

Yellow-Bellied Sunbird Cinnerys venustus
Scarlet-Breasted Sunbird Chalcornitra senegalensis } Very Common.

Nigerian Little Bunting Emberiza forbesi Two pairs seen. ^A ground feeder.

From Walewale, I went to Nakpanduri, situated on the rocky escarpment above the Moraga river (10° 40'N.) and stayed there from 18th-21st March.

Fox Kestrel Falco alopex Four seen at less than 20yds range, circling in front of the 600ft. cliff on which I was standing.

Bataleur Terathopius caudatus A pair of these splendid birds hunted one evening near the rest-house.

Stone-Partridge Ptilopachus petrosus Extremely common; its cries resounded among the rocks at all times of day.

Egyptian Plover Fluvianus aegyptius One seen on the sand-banks of the Moraga river.

Rock Dove Columba livia Noted on the highest cliffs.

Senegal Parrot Poicephalus senegalus Several seen in the Moraga plain flying over well-wooded country.

Pearl-spotted Owlet Glaucidium perlatum One started whistling in the late afternoon, and showed little fear when approached.

Freckled Nightjar Caprimulgus tristigma A bird near the rest-house one evening, where I could see it sitting on the rocks, and uttering a most peculiar call, a (usually) disyllabic 'Kvik-ouk', somewhat like a wolf-whistle, the second note being lower, and sounding rather owl-like. Several others of this species were heard calling on the scarp.

Rufous-crowned Roller Coracias naevius Two pairs seen where the trees of the Moraga plain meet the scree from the cliffs.

Giant Kingfisher Megaceryle maxima 1 on the Moraga river.

Red-throated Bee-eater Molittophagus bullocki A colony found nesting in the banks of the Moraga river.

Red-beaked Hornbill Lophoceros erythrorhynchus A party of 10 near the Moraga.

Bearded Barbet Pogonornis dubius Seen several times especially among trees near the rock-faces.

Scarlet-spectacled Flycatcher Platysteira cynea A pair found in a very shady place at the foot of a small cliff.

Paradise Flycatcher Tchitrea viridis Several in wooded gorges.

*White-crowned Cliff Chat Thamnodia coronata About six pairs found along the top of the scarp. A territorial species of great beauty. First published record from Ghana.

Rock-Loving Grass Warbler Cisticola emini Birds believed to be of this species (I did not secure any specimens) were seen not only among the rocks at Nakpanduri, but also around the cliffs at Damongo (9° 10'N.).

Gambian Swallow Hirundo lucida Several pairs nesting in the village of Nakpanduri.

Wire-tailed Swallow Hirundo smithii 2-3 pairs nesting under the road-bridge over the Moraga.

Red-Rumped Swallow Hirundo rufula Present on the escarpment above Nakpanduri.

Red-throated Crag Martin Ptyonoprogne rufigula Quite common on the cliff faces.

*House Martin Delichon urbica One seen flying past the above-mentioned cliff. First record for Ghana.

White-breasted Cuckoo Shrike Coracina pectoralis One seen outside the rest house on top of the scarp.

Orange-breasted Bush Shrike Chlorophoneus sulfurepectus One observed on the scarp.

Black-faced Fire-finch Lagonostica nigricollis A pair on the ground near the rest-house.

Blue-Billed Fire-Finch Lagonostica rubricata Occasional on top of the scarp.

Red-winged Anaplectas Anaplectes melanotis A male near the rest-house.

From Nakpanduri I travelled south to Buipe, where the Tamale-Kintampo road crosses the Black Volta. Being near the river, it is a heavily wooded area; there are also some standing pools by the roadside. I was there on 24th and 25th March.

Hammerkop Scoopus umbretta A common bird here, on every pool. Also at Damongo

Black-headed Heron Ardea melanocephala Several but less common than cinerea.

Tawny Eagle Aquila rapax Only one positively identified, but probably several.

Bataleur Terathopius ecaudatus Common.

*Water Thick-knee Oedionemus vermiculatus Excellent views obtained at close quarters of the plumage and leg colour; three pairs seen on the same small pool. Not found North of the forest, according to Bannerman (1953).

Violet Plantain-eater Musophaga violacea Several near the Volta.

Lesser Wood-Hoopoe Scoptelus aterrimus Five here, flying across the road.

Grey-Headed Kingfisher. Halcyon leucocephala One bird seen diving into a pool but I could not see if it caught anything. Another perched on a stick in the middle of the Volta.

Red-Shouldered Cuckoo Shrike Campephaga phoenicea Seen here and at Damongo, always, apparently, near water.

I went North from Buipe, to Damongo (9° 10' N.); here there is a very interesting game reserve, which I visited. I stayed in Damongo from 25th to 30th March.

Night Heron Nyctidorax nyctidorax Present in the reserve.

Hadada Hagedashia hagedash Present in the reserve.

Woolly-Necked Stork Dissoura episcopus Four in the reserve.

Marabou Stork Leptoptilos crumeniferus Frequent in the reserve, its pink throat-patch being most conspicuous.

Brown Harrier-Eagle Circus cinereus Two eagles, whose description only fits this species seen on the reserve.

Lizard Buzzard Kaupifalco monogrammicus Very common here.

Bronze-wing Courser Rhinoptilus chalcopterus. Birds believed to be of this species were flushed on the road about 8-9p.m.

Levaillant's Cuckoo Clamator levaillanti Several in the area.

Standard-wing Nightjar Macrodipteryx longipennis Many flushed from tracks in the reserve after 7.00 pm.

Blue-Bellied Roller Coracias cyanogaster Three at Damongo.

Carmine Bee-Eater Merops nubicus A large colony found in the reserve, in a bank of a small stream.

Ground Hornbill Bucorvus abyssinicus One flushed in the reserve.

Pied Flycatcher Muscicapa hypoleuca An adult male, in spring plumage, at Damongo.

Blue Fairy Flycatcher Eramornis longicauda One in the reserve near water.

Fanti Rough-winged Swallow Psolidoproone obscura Three odd individuals flying over the reserve.

Gladiator Shrike Malaconotus poliocephalus Several heard around Damongo.

Streaky-Headed Seed-Eater Poliospiza gularis Observed feeding on a seed-head in the reserve.

Cabanis's Bunting Emberiza cabanisi
Nigerian Little Bunting Emberiza forbesi } Both seen in the same place on the reserve.

Vitelline Masked Weaver Plesiositagra vitellinus Nesting at Damongo.

After my stay in the North, I came down to Kumasi, and thence to the Nkwatia, Abetigi, Aduamoa area, high on the Mpraeso scarp. Those species marked + are ones which I also found at Kade, which I visited afterwards (see below). I was at Nkwatia from 1st to 6th April.

+ Palm-nut Vulture Gypohierax angolensis Evidently common.

+ West African Harrier Hawk Gymnogenys typicus. Many; the commonest hawk.

Ghana Touraco Turacus persae Two positively identified, flying over a forest track, and then perching in a low tree.

+ Yellowbill Ceuthmochares aereus. Frequent; its trilling note was a familiar sound.

Buff-headed Wood Hoopoe Phoeniculus bollei A party of 6 birds drew attention to themselves by their calls, as they fed high up in a tree. They were most acrobatic, even hanging upside down.

+ Piping Hornbill Bycanistes fistulator Quite a few. Seen every day, flying rapidly over-head.

+ White-crested Hornbill Tropicranus albocristatus A secretive bird, but evidently common.

+ Grey Parrot Psittacus erithacus A few flew over in the evenings. Plentiful at Kade.

Red-crowned Parrot Poicephalus gulielmi I saw two preening in the evening and was shown a first-year bird in captivity; it was already quite tame.

Melancholy Woodpecker Dendropicos lugubris One noted on a dead tree near Aduamoa.

White-tailed Greenbul Baeopogon indioator At Nkwatia, this was a very noisy and conspicuous species, chasing about the undergrowth.

+ Chestnut Wattle-eye Dyaphorophya castanea Only one seen here; a rather shy little bird.

+ Rufous-crowned Eremomela Eremomela badiiceps A pair feeding in the tree-tops, where the rufous cap and the black breast-band showed up very clearly.

Red-throated Rock Martin Ptyonoprogne rufigula At Kwatia, this species was nesting on houses in the town, together with Colletes affinis.

Bare-headed Rock Fowl Picathartes gymnocephalus I was taken from Aduanoo, along a mile or two of narrow forest tracks, by a forest ranger. We came to a very steep-sided valley, where all the vegetation was damp and dripping, and slid down the golden leaves to a place where a cave had been formed in the sides of the valley. As we approached, we saw some vague shapes slipping away through the trees. We sat down inside the dark cave, listening to the water dripping down the rock. After a few minutes, there was a loud flapping noise, and there stood Picathartes, only about 25ft away, looking remarkably elegant in his wet and dark surroundings. More came up to the cave, about eight altogether, to see if it was safe to approach their nests - extraordinary, gourd-shaped things that were attached to the ceiling of the cave. (See Grimes & Gardiner (1963) Looking for Picathartes gymnocephalus in Ghana. Nig. Field 28 No. 2 : 55-63; and Grimes (1963) Some observations on Picathartes gymnocephalus. Nig. Field 28 No. 2 : 63-65.) I was very exultant at my luck in seeing these strange and beautiful birds; it was about the most exciting of my ornithological experiences in Ghana.

+ Superb Sunbird Cinnyris superbus Seen three times. Commoner at Kade.

White-naped Black Weaver Melanopteryx albinucha One male seen feeding low in a tree near Nkwatia.

Finally, I went to Kade, where I remained from 8th to 13th April, at the Agricultural Research Station. Near the A.R.S., there is a still lake, formed by a small dam, surrounded on most sides by thick forest. Besides the species marked (*) above, I saw, among others, the following:

Little Grebe Podiceps ruficollis A pair.

Hartlaub's Duck Pteronetta hartlaubii Three pairs on the lake, often perching high up in a dead tree.

Finfoot Podica senegalensis One pair.

Swifts :

Palm Swifts Cypsiurus parvus were common. Both Cassin's Spine-tailed Swift Chaetura cassini and Sabine's Spine-tailed Swift Chaetura sabini were seen side by side over the dam at less than 6ft range. Photographs were taken, which just show the differences that were very striking in the field; C. cassini was previously unknown West of Nigeria.

Further, two unidentified swifts were seen, one a dark swift, a bit bigger than C. sabini with the same square tail and similarly shaped wings. The other, which I only saw over the forest, may have been Bates' Swift M. batesi.

Blue-throated Roller Eurystomus gularis About : ten seen in a forest clearing.

+ Chestnut-headed Wood Hoopoe Scopelus castaneiceps 2-3 seen several times in the same place. Even more acrobatic than Phoeniculus bollei. Noisy, and not shy.

Brown-checked Hornbill Bycanistes cylindricus A party of six birds - very noisy, with many odd sounds - one was a sort of moaning, penny-trumpet cry.

Yellow-casqued Hornbill Ceratogymna elata Three observed in a clearing.

Black-headed Paradise Flycatcher Tohitrea nigriceps Two seen in low trees in fairly dense forest

Fire-crested Alethe Alethe castanea One adult mist-netted.

+ Golden-backed Weaver Phormoplectes proussi A female seen searching the bark of a tree, clinging with strong legs, behaving just like a nuthatch. Only one previously recorded between Sierra Leone and Cameroun.

* Yellow-Mantled Weaver Melanoploceus tricolor Very common.

Crested Weaver Malimbus malimbicus Several seen; not uncommon.

Red-Headed Weaver Malimbus rubricollis The common malimbe; abundant.

Blue-Billed Weaver Malimbus nitens. Only one noted.

Red-Vented Weaver Malimbus scutatus Few seen, but more suspected.

IV : SOME BIRDS AT TARKWA (WESTERN REGION)

I visited Tarkwa in the forest belt, just before I left Ghana, from 18th to 21st July. The River Bonsa is 10 miles from Tarkwa.

+ Great Blue Plantain-Eater Corythaecola cristata. 2 watched on the edge of a wooded clearing, a mile from the River Bonsa. I was told they were still quite common in the area despite the heavy timber-felling.

Shining-Blue Kingfisher Alcedo quadrybrachys Quite common on the River Bonsa.

Duchailu's Yellow-Spotted Barbet Buccanodon duchailui. One seen briefly passing through the forest canopy above my head.

+ Cassin's Grey Flycatcher Alseonax cassini Very aquatic: it perched on snags in midstream, catching insects and an occasional white butterfly on or near the surface of the water. It flew low and direct over the water, rather like a kingfisher. The male uttered a weak warbling song to the female while they were both sitting on a snag.

Black-and-White Flycatcher Bias musicus Only one, a female, identified.

Yellow-Browed Camaroptera Camaroptera superciliaris. 1 seen low down in a tree.

White-Throated Swallow Hirundo nigrita A common and tame bird of the river, both where the water rushed through the rocks and on the more placid stretches.

Square-Tailed Rough-Wing Swallow Psalidoprocne nitens I found at least 7 of these birds in a forest clearing, uttering rather shrill but weak notes. They frequently perched in trees, and I saw 2 sheltering from the rain under a palm-frond. Two other birds appeared to be building a round nest of fibres, 10ft off the ground, in the outermost branches of a low tree. They showed every sign of owning the nest, short of going inside it; they would fly in circles around it, and would then sit by the side of it. Of course, if it could be proved that this species really does build such a nest it would be unique, since roughwings generally nest in cliff-tunnels, as Bannerman (1958) records also for the present species in Cameroun.

Chestnut-Breasted Negro Finch Nigrita bicolor Single birds in different localities.

(CONCLUDED)

NOTES

Three Phases of the Many-Coloured Bush-Shrike at Ilaro. Chlorophoneus multicolor is an uncommon bird around Ilaro, South-West Nigeria. I have usually encountered it as a member of bird armies working through the denser parts of the forest, always singly as a species, and have nine sightings during the last five years in the locality. On 22nd November 1961 a bird was brought to me which had been caught in a friend's kitchen by his steward, on the Ilaro Reservation. One specimen was netted on 18th February 1964 in new secondary growth also near the Reservation.