



**West African Ornithological Society
Société d'Ornithologie de l'Ouest
Africain**



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Whilst we were watching the Robblers, a cuckoo flew by and settled on a mangrove. The uniform slate back and long tail were clearly seen. Unfortunately the bird flew off rather soon. The Yellow-billed Cuckoo Cuculus gularis has not been recorded as far south as this, and this bird may well have been the European Cuckoo C. canorus.

We noticed that amongst the many swifts flying over the area were a number whose silhouette was markedly different from the Little African Swift Colletoptera affinis. These birds had longer wings, shorter tails, and there appeared to be a notch on the trailing edge of the wing where it joined the body. One bird was seen flying low and a pale line across the lower belly was seen. The birds were clearly Spine-tailed Swifts Chaetura ussheri, which were not recorded at Lagos by Sander (Niger. Field 21 : 147-162 & 22 : R.E.Sharland 5-17, 1956 & 1957)

The European Little Bittern in Nigeria. Bannerman (1953) and Elgood et al. (1966, Ibis 108 : 84-116) refer to the possibility of the European race of the Little Bittern Ixobrychus minutus occurring in West Africa as well as the local I. m. payesii. In Kano Little Bitterns are seen fairly regularly as the reed-beds in borrow pits dry up at the end of March, and they occur in the wet season. On 20th April, 1966, my wagtail-catcher caught a female Little Bittern in the mist-net. The wing measured 145 mm and the first primary was 5 mm longer than the fourth, indicating that it belonged to the European race I. m. minutus. This appears to be the first positive record for West Africa, but it is probably a regular visitor. R.E.Sharland

Breeding of Red-Necked Kestrels. On 15th January, 1966 a pair of Red-necked Kestrels Falco chiquera flew around my compound at Mbaakon, southern Tiv Division, Beane Province. They drew attention to themselves by their call "ki ki ki ki". They were seen on several successive days, and on 28th January I noticed that they often perched in a certain Borassus palm. On 9th February one bird was sitting cross-wise in the axil of a horizontal leaf-stem of this palm tree, about 30 ft above the ground. The other bird sat on another leaf stem nearby. At the end of February the presumed female sat for short periods and spent the rest of the day away, hunting or perching at the top of a 40-ft high Isoberlinia doka tree, 50 metres away from the palm. At dusk both birds returned to the palm. On two occasions, one of the kestrels chased away a West African Goshawk Accipiter macroscelides, which also has been frequenting the area. No nesting material was visible from below, but the female did arrange some palm fibres on the leaf stem where she was sitting.

On 5th March white droppings were noticed on the sides of the Borassus leaf stem, and on the following day I saw a nestling for the first time. On 11th, two young were visible. They were already losing their white down and developing dark primaries and a dark

moustachial streak on the face.

On 18th March one of the young was out of the nest, sitting on a near-by leaf-setsa of the palm. This young bird was killed by a boy with a catapult on 20th. Its wing-spread was found to be 15".

On 25th March the second bird was out of the nest, and two days later had flown to another tree 500 ft away. During the nest four days, it took short flights to near-by trees and then began to hunt with its parents, returning during the day and at night to roost in an Isoberlinia near my house. The Red-necked Kestrels were not seen in my compound after 7th April, but then Village Weavers Plesiositagra cucullatus, which had nested in the Borassus in previous years, appeared.

A Red-necked Kestrel was observed in a Borassus palm at Miango, Jos, on 7th April, 1966. There were young birds in the tree, for I could hear their shrill cries although I did not see them.

H.H.Gray

Another Record of the Striped Crake. D. Wells' note on the occurrence of a Striped Crake (Porzana marginalis (Bull. Nig. Orn. Soc. 3 (9) : 13) prompts me to tender my only record in Nigeria of this elusive bird. In the evening of 2nd December, 1950, an adult flew into my bungalow at Cowan Estate, Ajegbodudu, Sapele, Warri Province, after dark. It was caught and examined fully in the hand, and agreed exactly with the description in Bannerman (1933, Birds of Tropical West Africa, Vol II : 17.).

Whether this bird was a migrant or locally resident is not known, although the species associated with it by Bannerman (1953 Vol VIII : 152), Porphyryla alleni, Gallinula angulata and Actophilornis africanus were all present on the estate in the rainy season (June to October), when the swampy ponds fill up with water. These species seemed to disappear in the dry season when the ponds dried out. I, too, am of the opinion that this species is not so rare as records suggest.

A. Macdonald

Egg of the Adamawan Turtle-Dove. At Mafako, Plateau Province, a pair of Adamawan Turtle-Doves Streptopelia hypopyrrhus were seen building their nest in a small dense 15 ft.-high Mango tree on 28th November, 1965. By the 30th the nest was complete and the first and only egg laid. By December 2nd the nest had been deserted, so the egg was taken. It is a typical white turtle-dove's egg, and is apparently the first one known, although this species is common on the Plateau. It measured 22 x 27.5 mm.

J.R.Lang

European Scops Owls. D.R.Wells' note on the migrant Scops Owl Otus scops at Ibadan (1966, Bull. Nig. Orn. Soc. 3 (9) : 10-11) raises some interesting points on the dates of records of this