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On the Feeding of Allen's Gallinule. On the River Rima at Kware, 10 miles N.E. of Sokoto, on 7th January 1967, I saw an interesting feeding habit of Allen's Gallinule Porphyrula alleni. This behaviour I have witnessed previously near Zaria (?date), and it is probably a perfectly normal and common habit of the species, but I can find no reference to it in any of ten major textbooks of African ornithology consulted.

As is well known, Allen's Gallinule swims, looking for insect and seed food, like a Moorhen Gallinula chloropus, and, more frequently, walks on water lily leaves and other waterside vegetation like a Lily-Trotter "Actophilornis africanus", picking food from it. What appears not to have been hitherto recorded however, is that it regularly turns over floating lily leaves to search the underside, which is undoubtedly much richer in food organisms than the upperside. This it does by standing on a leaf and curling one edge over with its bill, and then treading on the turned edge to prevent it springing back to its flat position under its own elasticity. This exposes only a quarter or so of the underside of the leaf, and I once saw a second portion of the same leaf turned over by the gallinule after it released the first portion.

Von Heuglin, quoted in Bannerman (1933, Birds of Trop. West Africa, Vol. II), notes that the species sometimes uses its toes to convey food to its bill. C.H.Fry

A Pomarine Skua Inland. A dark phase Pomarine Skua Stercorarius pomarinus was seen at Shaganu, Ilorin Province, on 28th May 1966 flying low over the sand bars heading steadily down the Niger. This species is by far the commonest member of its family in West African coastal waters during the northern winter (although it is not included in Elgood's Nigerian Check-list (1964, Bull. Niger. Orn. Soc. 1 (1) : 13-25). Its occurrence this far inland, however, is surprising, although skuas probably do cross land gaps on migration. It is likely, for instance, that they fly between the Mediterranean and the Gulf of Suez, a minimum distance of approximately 100 miles (the author saw an Arctic Skua S. parasiticus in the Bitter Lakes in March, 1961).

A direct migration across the desert from North Africa would, nonetheless, be very unlikely especially in May, but assuming from its flight heading that the Shaganu bird had followed the Niger for at least part of its journey, it must have travelled some 1,800 miles from the sea. From the point of observation it still had another 600 river miles to go to reach the coast.

D.R.Wells