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Notes on the avifauna of the Bétérrou area, Borgou Province, Republic of Benin

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Summary

Observations were made during 1987-1995. Of the 227 species listed, 15 have not previously been recorded in Benin, namely *Gallinula chloropus*, *G. angulata*, *Merops persicus*, *Pyrrhurus scandens*, *Cossypha niveicapilla*, *Erythropygia galactotes*, *Muscicapa striata*, *M. cassini*, *Hyliota flavigaster*, *Sylvia communis*, *Nectarinia verticalis*, *Sporopipes frontalis*, *Estrilda nonnula*, *Nesocharis capistrata*, and *Lonchura fringilloides*. Of the 227 species, 159 have previously been recorded in the Arli and Pendjari National Parks in N. Benin and Burkina Faso, and almost all are known from Togo. *E. galactotes* is not known from Togo or Ghana; its previously known range lies north of 13°N.

Résumé

Les observations ont eu lieu de 1987 à 1994. Sur les 227 espèces recensées, 15 n'avaient pas encore été signalées au Bénin: *Gallinula chloropus*, *G. angulata*, *Merops persicus*, *Pyrrhurus scandens*, *Cossypha niveicapilla*, *Erythropygia galactotes*, *Muscicapa striata*, *M. cassini*, *Hyliota flavigaster*, *Sylvia communis*, *Nectarinia verticalis*, *Sporopipes frontalis*, *Estrilda nonnula*, *Nesocharis capistrata*, et *Lonchura fringilloides*. Sur les 227 espèces, 159 avaient déjà été signalées des Parcs Nationaux d'Arli et de Pendjari au Nord Bénin et au Burkina Faso, et presque toutes sont connues au Togo. *E. galactotes* n'est connu ni du Togo ni du Ghana; son aire s'arrêtait auparavant au nord du 13°N.

Introduction

Most of my observations were made in the immediate surroundings of Bétérrou in the Borgou Province of central Benin. The few notes from other areas, but with significance for the Benin avifauna, are indicated in the footnotes to the Appendix.

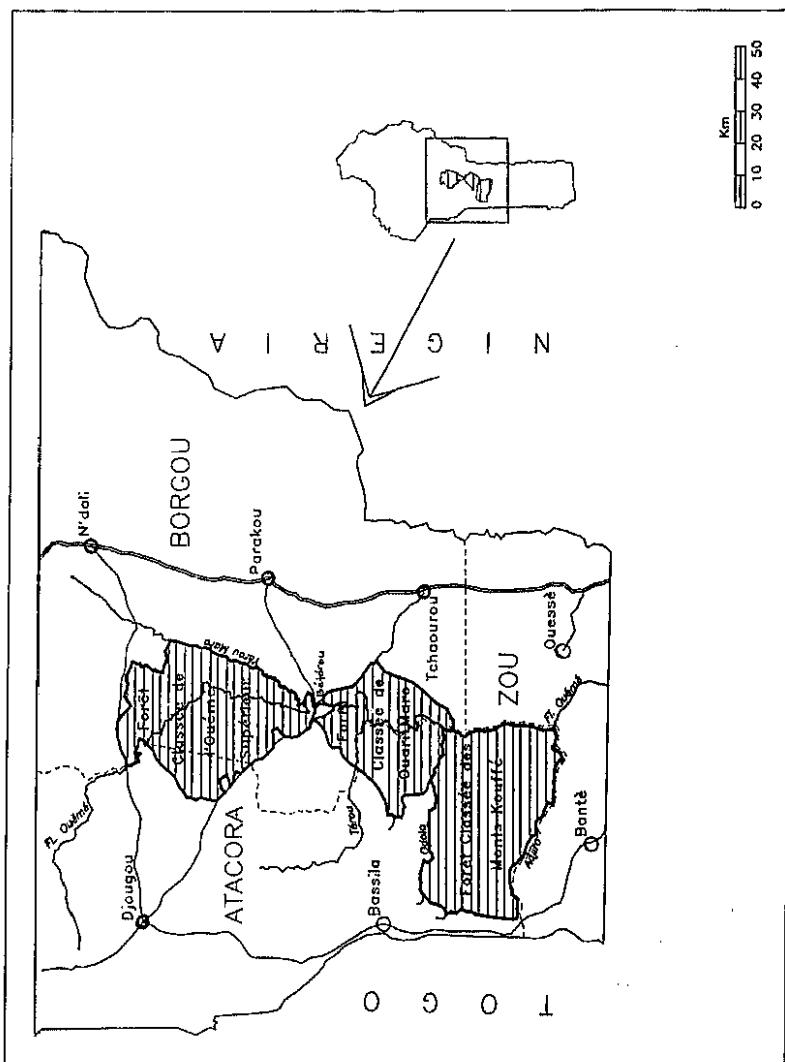


Figure 1. Map of central Benin, showing study sites. Dashed lines are provincial boundaries.

Table 1. Gazetteer

	N	E		N	E
Ahémé (Lac)	6°30'	2°0'	Natitingou	10°15'	1°20'
Bassila	9°0'	1°40'	N'Dali	9°30'	2°45'
Bétérou	9°12'	2°16'	Ouari Maro	9°10'	2°10'
Bohicon	7°9'	2°4'	Parakou	9°30'	2°30'
Boko	9°31'	2°30'	Savé	8°0'	2°30'
Dassa	7°45'	2°15'	Toho (Lac)	6°35'	1°10'
Kouffé (Monts)	8°30'	2°0'	Wé-Wé	9°20'	2°10'

All localities mentioned are given in Table 1 or Fig. 1 or both. The observations were made over nine years, 1987-1995.

Following correspondence with A.A. Green, I have included his hitherto unpublished findings from the Forêts Classeés of Ouari Maro, Ouémé Supérieur and Monts Kouffé (Green & Sayer 1977, A.A. Green *in litt.*) in this paper. They considerably broaden its scope and add much useful information, since Green had the specific goal of studying the forests, an area which I felt I had touched on only superficially.

The observations of Green & Sayer (1979) in the Arli and Pendjari National Parks, respectively in Burkina Faso and N. Benin, constitute the only other recent systematic study of any area of Benin, supplemented by the observations of Thonnerieux (1985). There are many similarities between the Bétérou area and the parks, significant differences being the cliffs and waterlogged area in the parks, and the more dense woodland and forest which are features of Bétérou (Green & Sayer 1977). Brunel (1958) established a list for the south of Benin and 102 of the species on that list are to be found herein. Holyoak & Seddon (1990) produced distributional notes which confirm a number of species identified here.

In this paper I indicate the abundance and status of each species based on my own notes. I have checked these against the more detailed observations of Green & Sayer (1979), particularly with regard to status. I have also indicated what I believe to be local movements of a number of species. Maclean (1993) was used for the identification of a number of calls.

The observations presented herein, together with those mentioned above, and studies of Togo by Cheke (1982), Cheke & Walsh (1980, 1984) and Cheke *et al.* (1986, 1990), go towards providing an overall picture of the avifauna of the Dahomey Gap, although there is still room for further study, particularly in Benin.

Habitats

Bétérrou is the geographical centre for this paper. In all, the area covered is from Wé-Wé, 30 km to the northwest, to Parakou, 45 km to the east. It includes the Forêts Classées of Ouémé Supérieur to the north and Ouari Maro to the south, with the notes of Green & Sayer (1977) from the Monts Kouffé, which I have not visited, and a few notes of my own from an area just north of Parakou.

The area lies within the Northern Guinea Savanna Zone, the rains lasting from May to October, with the peak in September. Consistent rainfall with a yearly average over 1200 mm means that the savanna is well wooded and features a variety of bird species, including four species of barbet, four species of hornbill and eight species of shrike.

The Ouémé, an important river which rises in northwest Atacora Province and drains Benin, flows through Bétérrou and is an important feature of the area. When it ceases to flow, from December to July, it has a small number of sandbanks and some very large pools. However, its most significant feature in terms of the avifauna is the heavy fringing vegetation and the gallery. There are a number of feeder streams with similar features though on a smaller scale, leaving wadis and areas of heavy vegetation and forest during the dry season which are very favourable to certain species such as shrikes, flycatchers, sunbirds and estrildids. The wetlands in the area consist mainly of small lily-covered ponds and some waterlogged areas along the open river banks.

Green & Sayer (1977) noted four principal forest types, as follows.

Dense, dry forest. A limited area which is a development of the more open savanna woodlands (denoted SW); it is composed of species typically associated with the savanna, with a maximum height of 20 m and a dense understorey. Characteristic species include *Afzelia africana*, *Daniellia oliveri* and *Khaya senegalensis*.

Dense, humid, semi-deciduous forest. Small patches (mostly 50-150 ha) near the Togo border and in the Monts Kouffé, consisting of four levels: a scrubby undergrowth with some grass, an understorey (2-8 m) dominated by small woody species and saplings of upper-storey species, an 8-25 m sub-canopy dominated by *Dalium guineense*, *Mimusops andongensis*, *Holarrhena floribunda*, *Drypetes floribunda* and *Malacantha ahnifolia*, and a canopy (25-40 m) dominated by *Antiaris africana*, *Ceiba pentandra*, *Cola cordifolia*, *Millettia excelsa*, and *Ricinodendron heudelotii*.

Gallery forest. Linear formations of dense forest with a maximum width of several hundred metres. Similar in structure and species composition to Dense Forest, with a more or less continuous canopy, but in general less rich.

Riparian forest. Like Gallery Forest but only a few metres wide.

The study covers these areas as well as the following types of habitat: savanna woodland, secondary growth forest, kopjes and rocky outcrops, farmland, human habitation sites, savanna scrubland, small ponds and areas of wetland along the

River Ouémé. It also covers all seasons of the year. The wide range of habitats explains the variety of species reported, from the unexpected *Erythropygia galactotes* (English names may be found in the Appendix), a sahelian bird reported in Benin for the first time and somewhat south of its known range, to *Guttera pucherani* and *Tauraco persa*, both forest species noted by Green & Sayer (1977).

As is often the case, the greatest threat to birdlife in the area comes from man. Until recently the area was very thinly populated, but deforestation and land exhaustion in the southern part of Atacora Province have brought about an influx of people in search of new farmland. Some areas of woodland are already being destroyed through slash and burn farming. The area bordering the Forêt de Ouari Maro is increasingly threatened although the government is now taking serious steps for the protection of these areas. There is also increased use of artificial fertilisers and pesticides, especially for cotton, which will probably have a significant effect on the overall ecology of the area.

Results and Discussion

Of the 227 species listed in the Appendix, 15 have not been reported from Benin in previously published studies to which I have had access, including Dowsett (1993). These are: *Gallinula chloropus*, *G. angulata*, *Merops persicus*, *Pyrrhurus scandens*, *Cossypha niveicapilla*, *Erythropygia galactotes*, *Muscicapa striata*, *M. cassini*, *Hylia flavigaster*, *Sylvia communis*, *Nectarinia verticalis*, *Sporopipes frontalis*, *Estrilda nonnula*, *Nesocharis capistrata* and *Lonchura fringilloides*. *Merops persicus* was observed by Green in the forest area. *Pyrrhurus scandens* was found in Ouari Maro by Green & Sayer (1977). *Sporopipes frontalis* is a first record and was found breeding. *Muscicapa cassini*, observed by me in the river gallery, has not been previously recorded in Benin, although it has been reported by Cheke *et al.* (1990) in Togo. *Sylvia communis* and *Muscicapa striata* are previously unrecorded Palaearctic migrants, while *Phylloscopus sibilatrix* has formerly been found only by Holyoak & Seddon (1990). *Ixobrychus minutus* and *Crecopsis egregia* were previously only known from 19th-century records (Oustalet 1898). *Emberiza cabanisi* was found by Douaud (1955) and frequently by me, although it seems to have been overlooked by Dowsett (1993). There have been two previous records for *Merops hirundineus*, J.F. Walsh's record which appears in Dowsett (1993), and an unpublished record for April 1978 by A.A. Green. I obtained two further records from October and December of different years. *Estrilda nonnula*, however, should be treated with caution, as indicated in the Appendix.

All the estrildids are subject to local movement during the dry season and perhaps more particularly so during the months of November to January, when there is the constant threat to their rainy season habitat from bush fires. This brings concentrations of these species into the restricted wetland and waterlogged areas.

The ponds harboured some interesting birds, including *Gallinula angulata*, a first Benin record even if not a very surprising one, and a breeding pair of *Porphyrrula allenii*, not previously recorded breeding here. Waders were less common, *Actitis hypoleucos* being the only common one. *Gallinago gallinago* was noted on a number of occasions, while *Tringa stagnatilis* possibly over-wintered. *Calidris minuta* was recorded once, and there were a number of other passage migrant waders. *Vanellus spinosus* probably bred at Savé. The *Gallinula chloropus* was recorded in southern Benin.

Of the species listed herein, Green & Sayer (1979) found 159 in Arli-Pendjari. The main distinction is in the number of raptors – 40 in the parks as against 16 for my study area. This is explained by the relative abundance of game in the parks. The floodlands of the park also present a wider variety of waders (20 species) and other waterbirds. The Bétérô area is distinguished by a greater variety of woodland and forest species.

Green & Sayer (1977) listed 95 bird species, of which 11 were forest birds not found in Pendjari by Green & Sayer (1979). These were: *Guttera pucherani*, *Tauraco persa*, *Bycanistes fistulator*, *B. cylindricus*, *Tockus fasciatus*, *Macronyx croceus*, *Pyrrhurus scandens*, *Terpsiphone rufiventer*, *Laniarius ferrugineus*, *Nicator chloris*, *Nectarinia verticalis*. All of these except for *Guttera pucherani*, *Tauraco persa*, *Macronyx croceus* and *Pyrrhurus scandens* have also been observed by me. Green notes however that there were "no true forest species" amongst his observations.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Peter McDermot who is at the origin of this paper and also Dr Robert Cheke for his encouragement and helpful comments. I am grateful to A.A. Green for very useful additional records, for his comments on this paper, and for spurring me to go back and look at the forest again.

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Appendix

Systematic list

Codes and conventions

Months in which the species was observed; 1-5 means present all months from January to May; 1,5 means observed only January and May.

Abundance

A - Abundant, seen daily in large numbers.
 C - Common, seen daily and in varying locations.
 F - Frequent, seen frequently in suitable locations or seasonally.
 R - Rare.

Status

R - Resident whole year
 L - Local movements noted (observed elsewhere in Benin at times when apparently absent from study areas)
 A - Intra-African migrant
 P - Palearctic migrant
 V - Vagrant

Habitat

R - Riparian including gallery
 W - Wetland
 H - Rocky hills
 S - Savanna (open scrub and bushland)
 SW - Savanna Woodland (light woodland, orchard bush or isolated patches of heavier woodland)
 V - Human occupation site
 F - Forest and secondary growth
 Breeding Codes, as used by the British Trust for Ornithology
 D - Courtship display, or agitated behaviour or anxiety calls from adults, suggesting probable presence of nest or young nearby.
 FL - Recently fledged young.
 ON - Adults entering and leaving nest site in circumstances indicating occupied nest (including colonies).
 N - Visiting probable nest site.

References are given for unpublished observations other than my own. AAG signifies information provided by A.A. Green *in litt.*; G&S signifies Green & Sayer (1977).

Species		Abun-	Months	Status	Habitat	Breeding References
		dance				
<i>Phalacrocorax africanus</i>	Reed Cormorant		10-5	F	L	R/W
<i>Anhinga rufa</i>	Darter		1-12	F	R	R/W
<i>Ixobrychus minutus</i>	Little Bittern (1)		1,4	R	R	R
<i>Nycticorax nycticorax</i>	Black-crowned Night Heron		1-12	F	R	R
<i>Ardeola ralloides</i>	Squacco Heron		12-4	F	A	W
<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>	Cattle Egret (2)		10-5	A	A	S
<i>Bubuloides striatus</i>	Green-backed Heron		1-12	F	R	R
<i>Egretta garzetta</i>	Little Egret		1	R	A	R/W
<i>E. intermedia</i>	Yellow-billed Egret		4	R	R	R/W
<i>E. alba</i>	Great White Egret		12	R	A	R/W
<i>Ardea purpurea</i>	Purple Heron		4-11	F	P	W
<i>Ardea cinerea</i>	Grey Heron		11-5	F	R	R/W
<i>Anastomus lamelligerus</i>	Openbill		1	R	A	R
<i>Ciconia episcopus</i>	Woolly-necked Stork		4	R	A	R
<i>Scopus umbretta</i>	Hamerkop		1-12	C	R	W
<i>Threskiornis aethiopica</i>	Sacred Ibis		9	R	A	R/W
<i>Bostrychia haemata</i>	Hagedash Hadada		1-12	F	R	R
<i>Dendrocygna viduata</i>	White-faced Tree Duck (3)		5-10	F	L	R/W

1 In stream near Ouari Maro, 6 Jan 1995.

2 Cinnamon breeding plumage begins to appear in April. The birds leave for breeding grounds in the north by the end of May or beginning of June. Return noted over five years between 18 and 22 October when groups of 4-5 can be observed on small open areas of ground where they were not seen later in the season. Returns in 1994 were later, with the first birds noted on 4 November. A large roost of an estimated 3000 birds is located on the river just north of Bétérhou.

3 Noted in small numbers in the Bétérhou area but helicopter pilots from the WHO/Oncho project have noted flocks of up to 500 to the northwest along the R. Ouémé.

Species	Abun-	Months	Status	Habitat	Breeding	References
<i>Plectropterus gambensis</i> Spur-winged Goose (4)	dance	12	F	R	R	
<i>Elanus caeruleus</i> Black-shouldered Kite (5)		12-4	C	L	S	
<i>Milvus migrans</i> Black Kite		10-5	C	A	S	
<i>Necrosyrtes monachus</i> Hooded Vulture		1-12	F	R	H	
<i>Gyps africanus</i> White-backed Vulture		1	R	R	S	
<i>G. rueppellii</i> Rüppell's Griffon		12	R	R	S	
<i>Terathopius ecaudatus</i> Bateleur		11	R	R	S	
<i>Circus macrourus</i> Pallid Harrier		1,11	R	P	S	
<i>Polyboroides typus</i> Harrier Hawk		1-12	F	R	SW	
<i>Meterax metabates</i> Dark Chanting Goshawk		9	R	A	S	
<i>M. galah</i> Gabar Goshawk		11-4	F	L	SW	
<i>Accipiter erythorhynchos</i> Western Little Sparrowhawk		11-4	F	L	S	
<i>A. badius</i> Shikra (6)		11-4	F	L	S	
<i>Buteastur rufipennis</i> Grasshopper Buzzard		11-4	F	A	S	
<i>Kaupifalco monogrammicus</i> Lizard Buzzard		1-12	C	R	SW	
<i>Buteo augurialis</i> Red-necked Buzzard		4,9	F	L	SW	
<i>Lophætus occipitalis</i> Long-Crested Hawk-Eagle		12-1	R	R	S	
<i>Falco biarmicus</i> Lanner		3-4	R	L	S	
<i>Francolinus albogularis</i> White-throated Francolin		4	R	R	R	AAG
<i>F. bicalcaratus</i> Double-Spurred Francolin		1-12	A	R	S	
<i>F. ahantensis</i> Ahanta Francolin		1-12	F	R	S	
<i>Ptilopachus petrosus</i> Stone Partridge		11-5	F	L	H	
<i>Guttera pucherani</i> Crested Guineafowl		9	R	R	F	G&S
<i>Numida meleagris</i> Helmeted Guineafowl		1-12	F	R	SW	FL
<i>Crecopsis egregia</i> African Crake		7	R	A	W	
<i>Amaurornis flavirostris</i> Black Crake		1-12	F	R	R	
<i>Gallinula chloropus</i> Moorhen (7)		1	R	R	W	

<i>G. angulata</i> Lesser Moorhen (8)	9.5	F	A	W	ON
<i>Porphyrrula allenii</i> Allen's Reed Hen (9)	8.11	R	A	W	FL
<i>Podica senegalensis</i> Finfoot	2	R	R	R	R
<i>Actophilornis africanus</i> Lilyroller	1-12	C	R	R/W	FL
<i>Burhinus senegalensis</i> Senegal Thick-knee	2.4	R	R	R	R
<i>Vanelias senegalensis</i> Senegal Waitled Plover	1.4	R	R	S	S
<i>V. albiceps</i> White-crowned Plover (10)	1-2	R	A	S	S
<i>V. spinosus</i> Spur-winged Plover	1	R	A	R	R

4 Seen only once in flight but said by local hunters to have been formerly plentiful in the area and still to occur occasionally. Helicopter pilots have noted flocks of 25-30 on parts of the River Ouémé further to the south of Bétérou in isolated areas. Resident in the Pendjari National Park (Green & Sayer 1979).

5 Noted at Bohicon and Dassa in September; may be nomadic.

6 Noted at Dassa in September; probably nomadic.

7 First Benin record. An adult in S Benin on a small pond near Lac Toho (Lokossa) on 20 Jan 1994.

8 First Benin records. Three sightings allowed prolonged observation. First noted on 9 Sep 1991 and again on 17 May 1994, in the same small, isolated, well-covered pond near Bétérou. Both birds were immatures, of an olive-brown colour, with a clear white line along the flank, a dark patch on the white vent and undertail covers of the short cocked tail, a yellow bill and no trace of the red frontal shield. From Oct 1994 to May 1995, up to ten adult birds were observed on two temporary ponds formed on streams dammed during the building of the new Parakou-Djougou road. In early May one bird was observed frequently resting on what appeared to be a nest built on vegetation in the middle of the pond. However, when the bridges were complete these ponds and nest site were destroyed.

9 Five birds (both sexes in breeding dress) on a small pond at Boko, 10 km north of Parakou, 23 and 29 Aug 1987. A pair (with faded head shields) with a juvenile, 40 km east of Bétérou, near Parakou.

10 Agitated behaviour suggesting presence of nest or young noted further south on the River Ouémé at Savé, 20 Jan 1994. This is outside the immediate geographical range of this paper but, since this is also along the River Ouémé, it seems possible that given suitable sandy habitat the birds I noted in the Bétérou area may also breed.

Species	Abundance	Months	Status	Habitat	Breeding	References
<i>Gallinago gallinago</i> Common Snipe (11)	R	12-1	P	W		
<i>Tringa stagnatilis</i> Marsh Sandpiper (12)	R	7	P	W		
<i>T. nebularia</i> Greenshank	R	10-3	P	W		
<i>T. ochropus</i> Green Sandpiper	R	12	P	W		
<i>Aciitis hypoleucos</i> Common Sandpiper	C	9-4	P	R		
<i>Calidris minuta</i> Little Stint (13)	R	12	P	S		
<i>Columba guinea</i> Speckled Pigeon	R	3-4	R	F		
<i>Streptopelia senegalensis</i> Laughing Dove	A	1-12	R	V		
<i>S. semitorquata</i> Red-eyed Dove	R	1-12	C	SW		
<i>S. vinacea</i> Vinaceous Dove	C	1-12	C	S		
<i>Turtur afer</i> Rcd-billed Wood Dove	C	1-12	C	S		
<i>T. abyssinicus</i> Black-billed Wood Dove	C	1-12	C	S		
<i>Oena capensis</i> Namaqua Dove	R	4	A	S		
<i>Terenon australis</i> Green Fruit Pigeon	C	1-12	R	SW		
<i>T. waalia</i> Yellow-bellied Fruit Pigeon	F	1-12	R	SW		
<i>Poicephalus senegalus</i> Senegal Parrot	A	1-12	R	SW		
<i>Agapornis pullarius</i> Red-headed Lovebird	R	5	R	SW		
<i>Pithecias kraemerii</i> Rose-ringed Parakeet	F	8-12	R	S		
<i>Tauraco persa</i> Green-Crested Touraco	R	4	R	F		
<i>Musophaga violacea</i> Violet Touraco (14)	F	1-12	R	R/F		
<i>Crinifer piscator</i> Western Grey Plantain-eater	C	1-12	C	R		
<i>Clamator jacobinus</i> Jacobin Cuckoo	F	1-3	A	SW		
<i>C. levantini</i> Levantian's Cuckoo	F	2.5.9	A	S		
<i>Cuculus gularis</i> African Cuckoo (15)	C	1-2	A	S		
<i>Chrysococcyx caprius</i> Didric Cuckoo (16)	R	8	A	F		
<i>Centropus senegalensis</i> Senegal Coucal	C	1-12	R	S		
<i>Tyto alba</i> Barn Owl	F	1-12	V			

<i>Otus senegalensis</i> African Scops Owl	3-4	R	R	F
<i>Bubo africanus</i> Spotted Eagle Owl	11-5	F	A	SW
<i>Glaucidium perlatum</i> Pearl-Spotted Owl	1-12	F	R	SW
<i>Strix woodfordii</i> Wood Owl (17)	1,4	R	R	F
<i>Caprimulgus inornatus</i> Plain Nightjar	11	F	A	S
<i>C. tristigma</i> Freckled Nightjar	1-4	R	L	S
<i>C. climacurus</i> Long-tailed Nightjar (18)	11	R	A	S
<i>Macrodipteryx longipennis</i> Standard-wing Nightjar	3	R	A	S
<i>Cypsiurus parvus</i> Palm Swift	1-12	F	R	R/W
<i>Apus apus</i> European Swift	4	R	P	S
<i>A. affinis</i> Little Swift	1-12	A	R	R
<i>A. caffer</i> White-rumped Swift (19)	1,10	F	R	R
<i>Alcedo cristata</i> Malachite Kingfisher	1-12	C	R	R

11 Observed on several occasions in the same location in wetlands near Bétérou, Jan 1991. Formerly noted in Pendjari (Thonnerieux 1985).

12 On a small pond near Bétérou, 1989. May oversummer.

13 One, 3 km east of Bétérou on muddy rainwater pool, 11 Dec 1994. Observed at < 10 m and compared with Hayman *et al.* (1986): small size; short, black bill and legs; winter plumage with scalloped, grey-brown upperparts, grey breast and clean, white belly; no supercilium apparent. Previously noted by Green & Sayer (1979) and at Lac Ahm in S. Benin (pers. obs.).

14 Observed with newly fledged young near Dassa, Sep 1994; probably breeds in Bétérou area also.

15 Groups of 3-4 birds.

16 At the southern end of the Forêt Classée of N'Dali, 30 km north of Parakou, 13 Aug 1987. This was also the location of Douaud's (1955) observation.

17 In the Forêt Classée de Bassila, Apr 1977 (A.A. Green *in litt.*) and at Ouari Maro, Jan 1994.

18 Very common on roads for a brief period, suggesting passage.

19 Often in mixed groups with *A. affinis*, or in isolated pairs.

Species	Abun-	Months	Status	Habitat	Breeding	References
	dance			S	N	
<i>Ceyx pictus</i> Pygmy Kingfisher (20)	2	R	A	S	S	
<i>Halcyon leucocephala</i> Chestnut-bellied Kingfisher	10-4	F	A	S	S	
<i>H. senegalensis</i> Senegal Kingfisher	1-12	F	R	SW	SW	
<i>Megaceryle maxima</i> Giant Kingfisher	1-12	F	R	R	R	
<i>Ceryle rudis</i> Pied Kingfisher	1-12	R	R	R/W	R/W	
<i>Merops pusillus</i> Little Bee-eater	8-10	R	A	W		
<i>M. hirundineus</i> Swallow-tailed Bee-eater (21)	4,10,12	R	L	SW		
<i>M. bullocki</i> Red-throated Bee-eater	11-4	F	L	R/W		
<i>M. persicus</i> Blue-cheeked Bee-eater (22)	4	R	A	F	F	AAG
<i>M. orientalis</i> Little Green Bee-eater	11	R	V	R		
<i>M. nubicus</i> Northern Carmine Bee-eater (23)	12-3	C	A	S		
<i>Coracias abyssinica</i> Abyssinian Roller (24)	11-4	C	L	S		
<i>C. naevia</i> Purple Roller	9-4	F	A	SW		
<i>C. cyanogaster</i> Blue-bellied Roller	9-4	R	A	SW		
<i>Eurystomus glaucurus</i> Broad-billed Roller	1-12	F	R	SW		
<i>Phoenixius purpureus</i> Senegal Wood Hoopoe	1-12	C	R	SW		
<i>P. aterrimus</i> Lesser Wood Hoopoe	11-5	F	A	SW		
<i>Upupa epops</i> Hoopoe (25)	4	R	P	S		
<i>Tockus erythrorhynchus</i> Red-billed Hornbill	9	R	R	S		
<i>T. fasciatus</i> Pied Hornbill	1-12	F	R	F		
<i>T. nasutus</i> Grey Hornbill (26)	11-8	C	L	SW		
<i>Bycanistes fistulator</i> Piping Hornbill (27)	4	R	R	F		G&S
<i>B. cylindricus</i> Brown-cheeked Hornbill	4	A	R	F		G&S
<i>B. subcylindricus</i> Black and White Casqued Hornbill	4	R	R	F		G&S
<i>Pogonornis chrysocoma</i> Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird	1-12	C	R	SW		
<i>Lybius veilloti</i> Vieillot's Barbet	1-12	F	R	S		
<i>L. dubius</i> Bearded Barbet	1-12	C	C			

<i>Indicator indicator</i>	Black-throated Honeyguide	4	R	R	F	G&S
<i>Campetherapunctuligera</i>	Fine-spotted Woodpecker	9	R	R	SW	
<i>Dendropicosfuscus</i>	Cardinal Woodpecker	1-12	F	R	SW	
<i>Mesopicosgoertae</i>	Grey Woodpecker	1-12	F	R	SW	
<i>Mirafra rufocinnamomea</i>	Flapet Lark	1-12	F	R	S	
<i>Psalidoprocneobscura</i>	Fanti Rough-wing	4	R	R	F	G&S
<i>Ripariapaludicola</i>	African Sand Martin	1-12	F	R	R	
<i>Hirundo senegalensis</i>	Mosque Swallow	11	R	A	S	
<i>H. abyssinica</i>	Lesser Striped Swallow	10-12	F	L	S/R	
<i>H. daurica</i>	Red-rumped Swallow	11-5	F	L	R	

- 20 Nest-building over a period of some days, in a very small hole about 1m down in the side of a well, Feb 1989. Wilkinson (1982) notes breeding beginning Mar (exceptionally Jan) in southern Nigeria but only Jun-Oct in the north (cf. Jones 1984).
- 21 Two previous Benin records: Natitingou (Atacora Province), Apr 1978 (A.A. Green *in litt.*); a previously unpublished record of J.F. Walsh which appeared in Dowsett (1993). My records are for Dec 1992 and 9 Oct 1994 when I noted a group of six in a wood clearing 15 km west of Bétérou.
- 22 Monts Kouffé, Apr 1978. This would appear to be the first Benin record.
- 23 Most often noted in flight or at bush fires, but also noted on the river apparently picking insects from the water surface (cf. Fry 1984).
- 24 Noted in extreme N. Benin, Sep 1989, suggesting that movements may be relatively local, to further north in Benin or to S. Niger.
- 25 I only recorded it north of Parakou but A.A. Green (*in litt.*) has records for the Forêts Classées of Ouari Maro and Ouémé Supérieur, Apr 1978.
- 26 Noted by Green & Sayer (1979) as resident all year round in Pendjari. In the Bétérou area I noted definite movements. Seen in groups of up to 20 in July, then disappears in August, until November. The distinctive call renders it unlikely to have been missed during this period. The movements may be local, to the more open parts of N Benin.
- 27 Forêt Classée de Bassila, west of the Bétérou area.

Species	Abundance	Habitat	Breeding References
	Months	Status	
<i>H. leucosoma</i> Pied-winged Swallow	9	R	V
<i>H. smithii</i> Wire-tailed Swallow	1-12	F	V
<i>Hirundo rustica</i> European Swallow	1-12	C	ON
<i>Motacilla alba</i> White Wagtail (28)	9	R	R
<i>M. aguimp</i> African Pied Wagtail	1-12	C	R
<i>Macropyx croceus</i> Yellow-throated Longclaw	4	R	F
<i>Campetherag. phoenicea</i> Red-shoulder Cuckoo-shrike (29)	4-5	F	F
<i>Coracina pectoralis</i> White-breasted Cuckoo-shrike	4-5	R	F
<i>Chlorocichla flavicollis</i> Yellow-throated Leaflove	11-4	R	R/F
<i>Pyrhurus scandens</i> Leaflove (30)	2,4	R	F
<i>Phyllastrephus albogularis</i> White-throated Bulbul	1-2	R	SW
<i>Pycnonotus barbatus</i> Common Garden Bulbul	1-12	A	ON
<i>Turdus pelios</i> West African Thrush	1-12	F	S
<i>Cossypha niveicapilla</i> Snowy-crowned Robin-Chat (31)	1,3-4	F	SW
<i>Erythropygia galactoia</i> Rufous Scrub Robin (31)	12	R	SW
<i>Saxicola rubetra</i> Whinchat	4,9	R	S
<i>Oenanthe oenanthe</i> European Wheatear	10	R	S
<i>Myrmecocichla albifrons</i> White-fronted Black Chat	9	R	S
<i>Sphenoeacus mentalis</i> Moustached Warbler	1-2	R	S
<i>Hippolais pallida</i> Olivaceous Warbler	11-4	R	SW
<i>Eremomela pusilla</i> Green-backed Eremomela	4,10	R	SW
<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i> Willow Warbler	9	R	SW
<i>P. sibilatrix</i> Wood Warbler (32)	9	R	SW
<i>Hyliaflavaster</i> Yellow-bellied Flycatcher (33)	12-1	F	L
<i>Sylvia communis</i> Whitethroat (34)	9	R	P

<i>Prinia subflava</i> Tawny-flanked Prinia	1-12	F	R	S
<i>Camaroptera brachyura</i> Bleating Bush Warbler	1-12	F	R	S
<i>Bradornis pallidus</i> Pale Flycatcher	11	R	R	SW
<i>Melaenornis edolioides</i> Black Flycatcher	1-12	F	R	SW
<i>Muscicapa striata</i> Spotted Flycatcher (35)	9	R	P	S
<i>M. aquatica</i> Swamp Flycatcher	1-12	F	R	W

28 Once only, in mixed group with *M. aguimp* on bridge by the river in Bétérhou.

29 With yellow rather than scarlet shoulder patch.

30 Noted by Green & Sayer (1977) in forest at Ouari Maro. More recently noted by me in gallery of the river at Bétérhou, Feb 1995.

31 First Benin records. One, observed at length in heavy undergrowth near Ouari Maro forest, Jan 1994. The narrow clear, white crown and red nape were clearly visible. A.A. Green also found it at Ouari Maro (pers. comm.).

32 First Benin record, no records for Togo or Ghana. Observed for lengthy period in a small wadi (typical habitat for the species) some 3 km south of Bétérhou, 26 Dec 1992. Identity unmistakeable, with its rufous colour and cocked tail, bill light creamy colour, clear white stripes on head. Serie & Morel (1979) state that the southern limit is "imprécise (13°?)" and that the Palaearctic race penetrates at least to 15°N; see also Wilkinson (1979).

33 A pair, low in orchard bush, 15 km west of Bétérhou in Sep 1994. Identified by distinctive yellow throat and breast, contrasting with belly. Called repeatedly. Previously recorded by Holyoak & Seddon (1990).

33 First Benin record. Frequently observed 1994-5, in orchard bush by my house, always in pairs, usually in mixed flocks, often with flycatchers and warblers. One flock contained *Batis senegalensis*, *Bradornis pallidus*, *Zosterops senegalensis*, *Eremomela pusilla*, *Prinia subflava* and *Anhreptes platara*. Belly appears light buff, not yellow; upperparts rich, glossy blue-black, with distinctive white wing-bar. Noted by Cheke *et al.* (1990) in Togo.

34 First Benin record. A female in scrub near my house at Bétérhou, 18 Sep 1994. Identified by striking white throat, brown crown, mousy brown upperparts and chestnut in the wing.

35 First Benin record. Seen 10 km west of Bétérhou, 21 Sep 1990. Brown upperparts and striped underparts well seen.

Species	Abun-	Months	Status	Habitat	Breeding References
<i>M. cassini</i> Cassin's Grey Flycatcher (36)	11	R	R	R	
<i>Batis senegalensis</i> Senegal Batis	9-4	F	L	SW	
<i>Platysteira cyannea</i> Scarlet-spectacled Wattle-eye	1-12	F	R	SW	
<i>Elminia longicauda</i> Blue Fairy Flycatcher (37)	1-12	F	R	F	
<i>Terpsiphone rufiventer</i> Red-bellied Paradise Flycatcher	1-12	R	R	F	
<i>Turdoides phebejus</i> Brown Babbler	1-12	C	R	S	
<i>T. reinwardtii</i> Blackcap Babbler	1	R	R	F	
<i>Phyllanthus atripennis</i> Capuchin Babbler	8	R	R	SW	
<i>Parus leuconotus</i> White-winged Black Tit	1-12	F	R	SW	
<i>Anthreptes collaris</i> Collared Sunbird (38)	12-2	R	L	SW	G&S, PMC
<i>A. platurus</i> Pygmy Long-tailed Sunbird (39)	1-12	F	R	SW	
<i>Nectarinia verticalis</i> Olive-backed Sunbird (40)	12-2	R	L	F	
<i>N. senegalensis</i> Scarlet-chested Sunbird	1-12	C	R	SW	
<i>N. venusta</i> Yellow-bellied Sunbird	11	R	L	SW	
<i>N. coccineigaster</i> Splendid Sunbird	1-2,4	R	R	RF	
<i>Zosterops senegalensis</i> Yellow White-eye	1-12	F	R	SW	
<i>Oriolus auratus</i> African Golden Oriole (41)	1-12	A	R/P	SW	
<i>Lanius senator</i> Woodchat Shrike	12	R	P	SW	
<i>Corvinella corvina</i> Yellow-billed Shrike	1-12	F	R	SW	
<i>Dryoscopus gambensis</i> Gambian Puffback Shrike	1-12	F	R	SW	
<i>Tchagra senegalala</i> Black-crowned Tchagra	1-12	C	R	S	
<i>Laniarius aethiopicus</i> Tropical Boubou	3-4	F	R	S	
<i>L. barbarus</i> Gonolek	1-12	F	L	F	
<i>Malacoptilas sulfureopectus</i> Orange-breasted Bush Shrike	11	R	R	SW	
<i>M. blanchoti</i> Grey-headed Bush Shrike	1	0	R	SW	
<i>Nicator chloris</i> Western Nicator	2,4	R	R	F	AAG, PMC

Prionops plumatus Long-crested Helmet-Shrike
Dicrurus adsimilis Glossy-backed Drongo (42)

	1-12	C	R	SW
	1-12	A	R	S

- 36 First Benin record. Three birds, mostly remaining quite hidden in the heavy growth overhanging the R. Ouémé in Bétérou, 28 Nov 1992. They were obvious flycatchers, with light breast and slate-grey back turning to black in tail. One bird was less dark than the others. *M. aquatica*, also present there, was quite different with its brown colouring and behaviour of perching in the open and sallying to pick insects from the water surface. Although *M. cassini* is a bird of river edges in the forest zone, given that it is not the only forest species noted in the area and that there are three large forests nearby, the record may not be unduly surprising. Recorded in Togo by Cheke *et al.* (1990).
- 37 Often found with *Tersiphone rufiventer* but its habitat seems to be more restricted. Often in gallery, less frequently in more open woodland.
- 38 Forêt Classée de Ouarti Maro.
- 39 Two pairs bred in my garden in exactly the same place in the years 1990, 1991 and 1992. Nesting was followed from Nov 1992 when a nest was destroyed by a child and a fledgling found. A second nest, possibly the same pair, was active some weeks later; male and female were noted on 30 Dec carrying material to the nest, which was about 2 m up in a guava tree. Work on the nest continued for some days and it was finished with some kind of downy cotton which was worked into the grassy strands. On 19 Jan the female was in the nest; there was no sign of the male. On 30 Jan, 13 and 24 Feb, male and female were still attending the nest, pushing their heads into the entrance. After that date the birds were still in the garden but the nest appeared to be abandoned.
- 40 First Benin record. First observed on 18 Dec 1992, also 4 Feb 1995 (a pair) in gallery along the R. Ouémé 4 km south of Bétérou. Noted as frequent in Togo (Cheke *et al.* 1986).
- 41 Said by Dowsett (1993) to be a migrant. My records would indicate that it is resident. Green & Sayer (1979) also considered it resident.
- 42 Often in pairs taking insects in flight from a high perch. During the rainy season, more inclined to work on the ground and groups of four or five seen picking insects from yam mounds and from the ground in cultivated fields. Calls, a grating churr, and a piping whistle of a single note, used at dusk by pairs some hundreds of metres apart, echoing each other's calls perfectly. Aerial display by a pair consisted of a towering vertical takeoff with no apparent taking of insects. As many as 15 feeding sallies per quarter hour. One pair fended off a *Polyboroides typus*.

Species	Abundance	Months	Status	Habitat	Breeding	References
<i>Ptilostomus after Piapiac</i> (43)	1-12	R	R	S		
<i>Corvus albus</i> Pied Crow (44)	1-12	R	R	S		
<i>Lamprotornis purpureus</i> Purple Glossy Starling (45)	1-12	C	R	S		
<i>L. chalcurus</i> Short-tailed Glossy Starling	4	R	A	S	G&S	
<i>L. splendidus</i> Splendid Glossy Starling	3-4	R	L	S	G&S	
<i>L. caudatus</i> Long-tailed Glossy Starling (47)	3-4	F	A	SW		
<i>Cimnyricinclus leucogaster</i> Amethyst Starling (47)	3-5,8	A	R	V	ON	
<i>Passer griseus</i> Grey-headed Sparrow	1-12	A	R	SW	ON	
<i>Sporopipes frontalis</i> Scaly-fronted Weaver (48)	1	R	R	W	ON	
<i>Ploceus luteolus</i> Little Weaver	1-12	F	R	W	ON	
<i>P. heuglini</i> Heuglin's Masked Weaver	5-9	F	L	SW	ON	
<i>P. cucullatus</i> Village Weaver	1-12	A	R	V	ON	
<i>P. melanopephalus</i> Yellow-backed Weaver	1-12	F	R	R	ON	
<i>Quelea erythrops</i> Red-headed Dioch (49)	7-8	F	A	S	ON	
<i>Euplectes afer</i> Yellow-crowned Bishop	7-11	R	R	S	D	
<i>E. hordeaceus</i> Fire-crowned Bishop	7-11	C	R	S	D	
<i>E. macrourus</i> Yellow-mantled Whydah (50)	6-11	A	R	S	D	
<i>E. franciscanus</i> Northern Red Bishop (51)	7-11	A	R	S	D	
<i>Nesocharitis capistrata</i> White-cheeked Olive Weaver (52)	12	R	R	RF		
<i>Pytilia phoenicoptera</i> Red-winged Pytilia	1,9-10	R	R	S		
<i>Lagonosticta senegala</i> Senegal Firefinch	1-12	C	R	S		
<i>L. rubricata</i> Blue-billed Firefinch	1-12	F	R	SW		
<i>L. larvata</i> Black-faced Firefinch	10	R	L	S		
<i>Estrilda caeruleiceps</i> Lavender Firefinch	1-12	F	L	S		
<i>E. melpoda</i> Orange-cheeked Waxbill	1-12	C				

E. nigrula Black-crowned Waxbill (53)
Uraeginthus bengalus Red-cheeked Cordon-bleu

9	R	V	S
1-12	C	L	S

- 43 Uneven distribution: rare in Bétérou area, very common in Parakou.
- 44 Uneven distribution: never around Bétérou, only further north and west.
- 45 The most common glossy starling of the area. Identified by metallic purple plumage without darker ear-coverts, orange eye and quite distinctive flat head. Very attracted to the flowering kapok trees *Ceiba pentandra* in January and February when large numbers of birds can be seen feeding on the flowers.
- 46 Unevenly distributed; favours more open country. Common in NW Atacora Province. Also frequently noted in the more open, northern parts of Togo (pers. obs.).
- 47 Often in quite large numbers in late April, especially large numbers of females. A pair watched for 15 min., chasing from branch to branch and dropping to the ground, pecking at one another, Aug 1994.
- 48 First Benin record. Observed repeatedly during January. Nest built about 2 m above ground in a small bush in woodland near Ouari Maro forest.
- 49 Nest built on reeds in a river, N. Benin (S. Sowah, pers. comm.). Around Bétérou in moderate numbers in breeding plumage.
- 50 In the breeding season as many as five adult males on a square of 200 x 200 m. Comes into breeding plumage towards the end of May or beginning of June. Probably present all year round but only clearly identifiable during the breeding season. Widespread in Benin.
- 51 As many as ten breeding males in a 200 x 200 m area. Much more abundant than *E. hordeaceus*.
- 52 First Benin record. One or two in heavy undergrowth under bridge over R. Ouniémé in Bétérou, 12 Dec 1994. Identified by olive back, black and white face, and grey underparts. Noted in Togo by Cheke *et al.* (1990) and in Feb 1994 (pers. obs.).
- 53 First Benin record. Not previously recorded west of the Cross River in SE Nigeria, so possibly an escaped cage bird (J.F. Walsh & R.A. Cheke, pers. comm.). In a low bush near Bétérou, 16 Sep 1991. Identification based on striking black crown, grey back and red rump.

Species	Abun-	dance	Status	Habitat	Breeding	References
	Months	A	R	S	ON	
	1-12	F	R	RW		
<i>Lonchura cucullata</i> Bronze Mannikin (54)	1-12					
<i>L. fringilloides</i> Magpie Mannikin (55)	1-12					
<i>Amadina fasciata</i> Cut-throat Weaver (56)						
<i>Vidua chalybeata</i> Senegal Indigobird (57)	1-12	F	R	S		
<i>V. wilsoni</i> Cameroon Indigo Finch	1-12	F	R	S		
<i>V. macroura</i> Pin-tailed Whydah (58)	6-11	A	R	S	D	
<i>Serinus mozambicus</i> Yellow-fronted Canary	1-12	C	R	S		
<i>Emberiza tahapisi</i> Rock Bunting	1-12	F	R	H		
<i>E. flaviventris</i> Golden-breasted Bunting	4	R	R	S		
<i>E. cabanisi</i> Cabanis's Yellow Bunting (59)	12-2,7	R	R	SW		

54 Noted entering and leaving nests in small colonies, often near water, Dec 1994. On 4 Feb 1995, groups of 5-6, many of which were pale, buff-coloured juveniles, seen huddled near nests.

55 First Benin record. Frequent in groups in tall grass in wetland areas. Noticeably larger than *L. cucullata*, with greater contrast between clear, white belly and black head and throat; bill pale silvery blue.

56 Not observed in the wild. A popular cage bird in Bétérrou, apparently brought from Niger and possibly N. Benin.

57 Distinguished from *V. wilsoni* by the purple feet (striking orange in *V. wilsoni*).

58 With *Euplectes macrourus*, the earliest species to appear in breeding plumage when the rains begin. *E. hordeaceus* and *E. franciscanus* both attain breeding dress some weeks later.

59 Noted in Atacora by Douaud (1955) but overlooked by Dowsett (1993). Noted in Togo by Cheke *et al.* (1990) during Aug.