



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



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NOTES.THE BLUE PLANTAIN EATER AT ABUJA.

The Blue plantain eater Corythaecola cristata has been recorded in scattered localities throughout the West African forest zone (Bannerman, 1953, 1 : 559-560). It is a common species in Ilaro Forest Reserve near Abeokuta (Button, 1964, Bull.Nig.Orn.Soc. 4 : 12-27). Although typically associated with forest, Elgood (1964, Bull.Nig.Orn.Soc. 1 (1):13-25) states that it also occurs in the savanna - presumably in forest relicts. Observations on a flock of about six of these birds in the forest on the south side of Zuma rock near Abuja (9° 11'E., 7° 11'N.) suggests that the blue plantain eater can survive in small isolated patches of forest. This forest, less than a square mile in extent, has a structure similar to that of true forest 200 miles to the south although many of the larger trees are savanna species. There is a dense canopy and several Musanga trees, which are favoured by the plantain eater, grow in the forest.

'Forest relicts' or 'outliers' are an interesting feature of the southern Guinea savanna (Jones, 1963, J.Ecol. 51 : 415-434). Most of them are small in area and separated from each other by woodland savanna. A more detailed knowledge of the distribution of the blue plantain eater, and other species of 'forest' birds, will show how successfully these species have survived in isolated patches of forest (see, for example, Wells & Walsh, 1969, Bull. Nig.Orn.Soc. 6 : 1-25). Mona nonkeys Cercopithecus mona were observed in the Abuja forest and they have been seen also in the swamp forest north of the Niger river near the Kainji Dam. It is unlikely that these nonkeys move from one forest relict to another, and if the population died out it would not be replaced by new immigrants. In contrast, large birds like the blue plantain eater may be capable of moving from forest to forest if necessary. Patterns of movement within and between relict forests might show how these 'forest' species - birds and mammals - have managed to survive in the guinea savanna.

D. G. D. Happold.

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INTERNATIONAL WILDFOWL CENSUS

Wildfowl counts during the 1969/70 winter were virtually restricted to the Nguru area. This is probably the main wintering area for migrant duck in Nigeria but it is regretted that information was not available from the Maiduguri and Sokoto lakes. In both of these areas swamp drainage and the cultivation of rice and wheat is taking place and it would be interesting to know the effect of these measures on wildfowl.

The heavy and unusually late rains did not produce more than the normal flooding in the Kano area. Nguru had more flooding early in the season but the level of the lakes in March was not higher than usual (probably an indication of the falling water-table).

Garganey Anas querquedula were more numerous than in 1968/69, but more widespread and therefore difficult to count. The maximum total obtained was of 2,600 at Kirikasama in February. Ferruginous Duck Aythya nyroca were almost as numerous as Garganey and 1,000 birds were counted at Kirikasama in February. Pintail Anas acuta were very scarce, the largest flock observed was 20.

The only other migrant duck species recorded was of a small flock of ca. 20 Common Teal Anas crecca near Kano in November (in an area where they have appeared several times in recent years).

White-faced Whistling Duck Dendrocygna viduata and Fulvous Duck Dendrocygna fulva were absent from the Matara area south of Nguru in December. It appeared that they had moved to the flooded Acacia bush to the north of Nguru. Very large numbers of both these ducks were seen near Kirikasama (ca. 3,000 of each) in February.

The Hottentot Teal Anas punctata explosion continues. Flocks of up to 30 in number were seen near Kano in November and Nguru in December. In Kano on 12th March 1970, a pair were seen with five recently hatched ducklings on a borrow-pit only six acres in size, which is used by a large number of people daily.

R. E. Sharland.

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ADDITIONS TO LOCAL AVIFAUNA - IBADAN.

Woolly-necked Stork Ciconia episcopus: A single bird was seen flying over the University of Ibadan Farm at dusk on 6th March 1969, by F. Walsh, R.W. Ashford and R.H.P. J. Elgood, who was observing at a different part of the area also saw the bird.

Icterine Warbler Hippolias icterina: A specimen was collected by the Rockefeller Virus Research Department, University College Hospital, Ibadan on 17th April 1969. The bird was sent to the Zoology Museum, Univ. of Ibadan for identification.

Common Bristle-bill Bleda syndactyla: An immature female bird was caught in dense secondary forest on the University of Ibadan campus on 12th September 1969. The specimen is now in the collections of the Zoology Museum, University of Ibadan.

Gold Coast Spine-tailed Swift Chaetura ussheri: Two live birds were brought to the University of Ibadan Zoo. They were in very poor condition having been flown for some time like kites on the ends of long pieces of string. The owner said he had caught them in a nest in Ibadan.

Ferruginous Duck Aythya nyroca: A bird observed by J.B. Higham, J.P. Goo & R.H.P. on 26th December 1969 at Eloiyale Reservoir.

Roy H. Parker.