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Société d'Ornithologie de l'Ouest
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Some interesting bird observations in Mauritania and Senegal

I visited Mauritania in Nov-Dec 1992, and Senegal Nov-Dec 1994, as a member of two expeditions organized by the Danish Ornithological Society; the tour leader was in both cases Anette Sonne. The following notes are from my personal observations.

In Mauritania, we travelled south from Nouakchott, to Rosso on the Senegal river, and we visited the surrounding area. After unusual heavy rains earlier in the year, the vegetation was more luxuriant than usual. We also travelled north from Nouakchott to the Banc d'Arguin, through desert or semi-desert close to the Atlantic ocean.

***Porphyrio porphyrio* Purple Swamphen.** We recorded 11 birds, of which three were not fully grown, in reeds along the Senegal river at the wharf of Rosso, 24 Nov. This is of course very close to Senegal but the young birds were surely hatched in Mauritania. Dowsett *et al.* (1993) do not mention this species for Mauritania, although Lamarche (1988) mentions a breeding record from Aleg in November.

***Phoenicurus ochruros* Black Redstart.** Two female-plumaged birds were observed in the Sabbah Hotel garden just outside Nouakchott, a little green oasis in a semidesert area, 2 Dec. Rodwell *et al.* (1996) claim it to be a rare winter visitor in Mauritania. Browne (1982) and Lamarche (1988) mention a few records from Nouakchott and Nouadhibou.

***Passer simplex* Desert Sparrow.** We found three males and two females in Tiouilt, a very small fishing settlement at the shore of the Atlantic ocean, c. 100 km north of Nouakchott, 25 Nov. When we returned on 30 Nov, two males and a female were still present. Coastal records are few, although Lamarche (1988) mentions it as found from the Atlantic Ocean (Iouik, Tanandert) to the east of the country.

***P. domesticus* House Sparrow.** In Tiouilt we recorded 12 birds together with the Desert Sparrows, 25 Nov. According to J.D. Summers-Smith (*in litt.* 1992) this might be an extension of range northwards of c. 100 km.

In Senegal, we visited the Keur Momar-Sar area of Lac de Guier, Djoudj National Park, the Fataala region of Parc National du Delta du Saloum, and Palmarin (Ngoullu,

a flat, coastal region some 150 km south of Dakar). In Senegal, 1994 was also more wet than usual.

Chelictinia riocourii Swallow-tailed Kite. At least 24 birds c. 20 km southwest of Kaolack, 30 Nov. Irregular according to Morel & Morel (1990).

Tryngites subruficollis Buff-breasted Sandpiper. Five birds in Palmarin, 2 Dec. Four of them were feeding together on short grassland and in some shallow ponds close to the shore. The fifth was observed simultaneously c. 1 km to the north, by other members of our group. The birds were very unafraid and we could approach to 20 m. Only one previous Senegal record (Morel & Morel 1990).

Charadrius marginatus White-fronted Sand Plover. Several birds in Palmarin, including a pair with newly hatched chicks, 2 Dec.

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Observation of Savile's Bustard *Eupodotis savilei* in The Gambia

On 10 September 1996, we surveyed birds in grassy scrub habitat 6 km east of Kaur in the North Bank Province of The Gambia. Between 10h00 and 11h00 we tape-recorded 24 songs. Three birds were heard, about 100 m apart; the songs came from the ground and were given in apparent response to each other. CRB and Mo Ceesay saw a small, short-necked bustard with a blue-grey head, stalking through low grass where we heard the songs. We then heard two more singing birds in a millet field 2 km further west and saw a bustard flying fast and low from the source of these songs. It was small (hardly larger than a Pied Crow *Corvus albus*); with a long thin neck and large head, both buffy, and black belly; the wings had a pale stripe running