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by the end of July. It continued to be scarce until the end of the known breeding season. Local people confirmed this difference from other years. At the same time, a possible, but lesser, decline in *Euplectes* spp. was noted, particularly of Yellow-mantled Whydah *E. macrourus*. Lack of quantitative data make the latter observation more difficult to substantiate, but the decline in the population of *V. macroura* was easily established by the simple lack of field observations in the period Apr–Oct 1997.

I have no idea why this should have occurred, apart from a possible epidemic. There has been no apparent habitat destruction. However the increasing use of pesticides for cotton and other agricultural production in the area must be mentioned and *V. macroura* is considered to be a pest by Dept. of Agriculture officials (J.B. Adjakpa pers. comm). R.A.Cheke (*in litt.*) has speculated that the declines in this species might be associated with reductions in available host species; in the study area, these are Orange-cheeked Waxbill *Estrilda melpoda* and Black-rumped Waxbill *E. troglodytes*. However no observations to support this have been made.

My thanks to Drs. J.F. Walsh and R.A. Cheke for comments on this note.

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Patrick Claffey

B.P. 302, Parakou, Benin

Cream-coloured Courser *Cursorius cursor*, new for Ghana

On 19 May 1996, in the coastal area of Ghana, east of Prampram (*c.* 60 km from Accra), we discovered two Cream-coloured Coursers *Cursorius cursor* along the side of the road. The road runs parallel to the coast, *c.* 300 m from the coastline and the

habitat is stony grassland with low bushes. We were familiar with the species in Syria. As we had only recently taken up our new assignment in Ghana, we merely noted the observation.

Subsequently, on 27 July 1997, we saw Temminck's Courser *C. temminckii* along a track which runs in a northerly direction parallel to the Kpeshie Lagoon just at the eastern outskirts of Accra. We noted a clear difference between that species and the birds seen in May 1996, *i.e.* the chestnut cap. We only realized the significance of the May observation at a much later date, when we found that Grimes (1987) does not list the species for Ghana, while in Urban *et al.* (1986) Ghana is not included in the distribution area of the species. Similarly, Hayman *et al.* (1986) indicate a southern limit to the West African range of Cream-coloured Courser somewhat north of Ghana. Elgood *et al.* (1994) report it in northern Nigeria.

This, therefore, appears to be the first record of Cream-coloured Courser in Ghana. However, the migratory habits of the species, particularly Mediterranean populations, make such an occurrence relatively unsurprising.

We should like to thank Guy Manners for his inspiring bird-watching support in Syria and for critically reading the manuscript.

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A.J.G. van Gastel & E.R. van Gastel

c/o GTZ, P.O. Box 9698, Kotoka International Airport, Accra, Ghana

First records of Xavier's Greenbul *Phyllastrephus xavieri* in Nigeria

On 13 December 1997, while walking along an old logging track in Cross River National Park, Oban Division, Nigeria (5°47'N, 8°26'E) our attention was drawn by nasal calls coming from members of a mixed bird party, at a height of about 10–15 m. Two birds responded immediately to playback by approaching and calling excitedly.