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Additions and corrections to the avifauna of Congo

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Summary

This paper documents 69 recent additions and a few corrections to the preliminary checklist of the Congo avifauna published by Dowsett & Dowsett-Lemaire (1989). The total number of species now known from the country is 567. All the recent records are from the south-western part of the country; the north is still largely unexplored. Fifteen of the new records are of Palearctic migrants (including *Charadrius alexandrinus*, the most southerly sighting so far) or vagrants (*Calidris subminuta*). New intra-African migrants include the swallows *Hirundo cucullata* and *H. spilodera*, on the late date of 4 November. Most new records of forest birds fill gaps between forested regions to the north and south where these species were already known, or represent southward extensions from Gabon. Several of these are from flooded forest, a habitat rather neglected by naturalists so far (e.g. *Canirallus oculus*, *Jubula lettii*, *Scotopelia bouvieri*, *Caprimulgus batesi*).

Résumé

Cet article documente 69 additions récentes et quelques corrections à la liste préliminaire des oiseaux du Congo publiée par Dowsett & Dowsett-Lemaire (1989), ce qui donne un total de 567 espèces. Toutes ces nouvelles données proviennent du sud-ouest du pays; le nord reste encore largement inexploré. Quinze des données récentes concernent des espèces paléarctiques, y compris *Charadrius alexandrinus* (dont c'est l'observation la plus méridionale en Afrique) et un erratique, *Calidris subminuta*. Parmi les migrateurs intra-africains, citons les hirondelles *Hirundo cucullata* et *H. spilodera*, de passage tardif un 4 novembre. La plupart des nouvelles données d'espèces forestières étaient à prévoir comme ces oiseaux étaient déjà connus au nord et au sud du Mayombe congolais; d'autres représentent une extension vers le sud à partir de la forêt gabonaise. Plusieurs de ces espèces fréquentent essentiellement ou exclusivement la forêt inondée, un milieu fort peu étudié jusqu'ici, par ex. *Canirallus oculus*, *Jubula lettii*, *Scotopelia bouvieri*, *Caprimulgus batesi*.

Introduction

This paper updates the preliminary checklist of the birds of Congo published by Dowsett & Dowsett-Lemaire (1989): therein, some 500 species were considered sufficiently well documented while a number of doubtful records were also mentioned as requiring confirmation.

From August 1990 to January 1991, with one week in April 1991, FD-L and RJD carried out a study of the natural resources of the Kouilou basin (from the coast to the Mayombe) on behalf of the petroleum company Conoco (Dowsett & Dowsett-Lemaire 1991). Habitats in the basin are diverse and include dry-land forest (virtually the only habitat on the Mayombe hills), seasonally and permanently flooded forest (extensive in the sublittoral zone of the lower Kouilou basin), mixed papyrus marsh, flooded grassland, dry sandy grassland, mangrove, coastal thickets, rivers and some small lakes. Some 427 species were recorded in and around Conoco's concession (4°-4°40'S, 11°40'-12°10'E), including many new country records (Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett 1991). Since for most species apart from the seabirds (Dowsett & Simpson 1991) details of localities and dates were not given, it seems preferable to list and substantiate all additions to the 1989 checklist in the present paper. For seven species of seabirds new to the country, details appear in Dowsett & Simpson (1991), the species being the Southern Giant Petrel *Macronectes giganteus*, Wilson's Storm Petrel *Oceanites oceanicus*, Madeiran Storm Petrel *Oceanodroma castro*, Pomarine Skua *Stercorarius pomarinus*, Sabine's Gull *Larus sabini*, Caspian Tern *Sterna caspia* and Little Tern *S. albigrons*. All but the last two were seen mainly off-shore, with one *Oceanites* seen along Tchissanga beach on one occasion.

PB was resident in Pointe-Noire from May 1990 to Mar 1992 and contributed several new records from coastal regions. We also include a few new species records provided by R.D.H. Simpson (pers. comm.) during excursions along the coast (1985-1991), and one observation by R. Demey (*in litt.*) on a visit to Brazzaville.

Details of plumage are given below for only a few species, *i.e.* the more tricky and unusual ones. Corrections to the 1989 list concern some critical specimens examined in Paris (Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle) by RJD and FD-L in 1991, and the local status of three bulbuls has to be modified after the confusion over identifications based on published tapes (Chappuis 1975) was sorted out during 1990. Finally, the one other post-1989 reference to the country's avifauna (Hecketsweiler & Mokoko Ikonga 1991) has added several improbable species without justification: unacceptable records are detailed below.

A gazetteer of Congo zoological localities was published by Dowsett (1991); coordinates of sites mentioned for the first time here are: Djéno 4°56'S, 11°57'E; Foni (Lac) 4°30'S, 11°46'E; Loufouléba (Lac) 4°55'S, 11°58'E; Malélé 4°25'S, 12°8'E; Mango-Tandou 4°33'S, 11°59'E; Pointe-Indienne 4°40'S, 11°47'E.

Additions to the Congo List

Jackass Penguin *Spheniscus demersus*. Dowsett & Dowsett-Lemaire (1989) and Dowsett & Simpson (1991) overlooked a report of one captured by a fisherman (and seen by a zoologist) at Pointe-Noire in March 1954 (Malbrant & Maclatchy 1958). While one cannot be sure that this bird arrived without an assisted passage on a boat, its occurrence as a natural vagrant is supported by another, in Gabon further north, away from the route taken by boats to and from the Cape (Malbrant & Maclatchy 1958).

White-breasted Cormorant *Phalacrocorax carbo*. Only two observations: one on Lac Loufouléba (Djéno) 18 Aug 1990 (PB); one on the Kouilou River at Kakamoéka 12 Oct 1990 (FD-L).

Tiger Bittern *Tigriornis leucolophus*. Recorded throughout the region, in swamp forest and along small streams in rain forest (FD-L, RJD).

Black Duck *Anas sparsa*. An adult was well seen on a small wooded river near Bas-Kouilou in August 1986 (R.D.H. Simpson pers. comm.).

Black-breasted Snake Eagle *Circaetus gallicus pectoralis*. A pair seen twice in forest clearings near Béna (Sep and Nov 1990, FD-L and RJD). The species was already known, from a specimen collected in Brazzaville (Malbrant & Maclatchy 1949), but was omitted in error from our 1989 checklist.

Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus*. One male over coastal savanna near Bas-Kouilou, on 29 Jan 1991 (FD-L, RJD).

European Marsh Harrier *C. aeruginosus*. One female at Bas-Kouilou (over mangrove) 2 Jan 1991 (FD-L, RJD); a female near Diosso 3 Mar 1991 and an immature at Lac Foni 20 Feb 1992 (PB, latter with P. Alexander-Marrack).

Chestnut-flanked Goshawk *Accipiter castanilius*. One flying low through forest understorey at Goumina, 16 Sep 1990 (FD-L).

Black Goshawk *A. melanoleucus*. A few observations of singles in sublittoral forest-savanna mosaic and in the Mayombe (FD-L, RJD).

Steppe Buzzard *Buteo buteo*. Three sightings, 6 Jan 1991 at Bas-Kouilou (PB, RJD), 17 Feb 1991 at Mango-Tandou and 21 Sep 1991 at L. Foni (PB).

Grey Kestrel *Falco ardosiaceus*. One seen near Djéno on two occasions (30 Dec 1990, 24 Mar 1991) with a pair on 12 Feb 1992, in savanna dotted with small tree clumps (PB).

Harlequin Quail *Coturnix delegorguei*. A female (breeding?) watched closely several times in dry grassland at Ménengué (Sep 1990, FD-L, RJD), and a pair seen near Pointe-Indienne 8 Mar 1992 by PB who also saw the species in captivity there.

Nkulengu Rail *Himantornis haematopus*. Heard widely in dry-land rain forest, especially in the Mayombe; tape-recorded (FD-L).

Grey-throated Rail *Canirallus oculus*. Commonly heard, even numerous, in flooded forest of the Kouilou basin, and in the Mayombe (Magne) where the right habitat is far more local (FD-L). Densities and voice are described in Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett (1991).

Böhm's Flufftail *Sarothrura boehmi*. Heard in rank grass near the coast, at Tchissanga and Mpindé, from 17 Dec 1990 to Jan 1991 (FD-L).

Striped Crake *Aenigmatolimnas marginalis*. At least two birds (a male and a female, judging by their coloration) were flushed from a seasonal sedge and *Jardinea* grass swamp at Bas-Kouilou on 1 Jan 1991 (FD-L). The water was 20-30 cm deep.

Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*. Two first-year birds on muddy shore at Bas-Kouilou 14 Nov 1990 (FD-L, RJD); three at Pointe-Noire beach 13 Jan 1991 (FD-L, RJD, PB); subsequently seen at Pointe-Indienne by PB (e.g. Dec 1991).

Three-banded Plover *C. tricollaris*. Two adults on dry land in the port area of Pointe-Noire 22 Oct 1990 (RJD).

Kentish Plover *C. alexandrinus*. One well seen on Pointe-Indienne beach 8 Dec 1991 by PB (the dark lateral breast patches, and in flight broad white sides to the tail, distinguished this from other possible *Charadrius* species).

Little Stint *Calidris minuta*. Several near Tchissanga 4 Dec 1990 (RJD, see next species), and two on Pointe-Noire beach 13 Jan 1991 (FD-L, RJD, PB).

Long-toed Stint *C. subminuta*. On 14 Nov 1990 we found an unfamiliar stint *Calidris* sp. in a small group of waders pushed by the high tide onto dry ground near the buildings of Conoco's base at the Kouilou River mouth (4°27'S, 11°41'E). We were watching these birds at a range of just a few metres, with binoculars, from our vehicle. Other species in the group, alongside the stint, were Sanderlings *C. alba*, Ringed Plovers and a White-fronted Sandplover *Charadrius marginatus*.

We were struck by the bird's yellowish-green legs and very upright, long-necked appearance. It was a small stint, with a fairly long bill (longer than in Little Stint *C. minuta*). It was generally greyish, with a slight band of streaking on the chest, and traces on the back of a few brown feathers. In flight it showed a white wing bar and

white sides to the tail. We were convinced that the leg colour was natural, and the following three species came to mind: Temminck's Stint *C. temminckii*, Long-toed Stint or Least Sandpiper *C. minutilla*. Its "jizz" and streaky plumage were not at all like Temminck's Stint, which reminds us of a miniature Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*. The long-necked appearance pointed more to Long-toed Stint; when we renewed an acquaintance with Least Sandpipers in Maryland in early 1992, we felt we could definitely rule out that dark, stumpy little bird, which has a relatively short neck and legs.

We were unable to photograph this bird or to show it to another ornithologist, but we are confident of the identification. The few African records are mostly from the east (Urban *et al.* 1986), with a couple from South Africa. One of these, a captured bird, was originally identified as Least Sandpiper (Sinclair *et al.* 1984, 1986) but there is as yet no acceptable record of the latter in Africa.

Curlew Sandpiper *C. ferruginea*. A dozen or so with Little Stints by a road puddle near Tchissanga beach 4 Dec 1990 (RJD). Also seen at Pointe-Noire by PB (no dates).

Curlew *Numenius arquata*. Two seen with Whimbrels *N. phaeopus* at Bas-Kouilou 26 Aug 1990 (FD-L, RJD, PB).

Redshank *Tringa totanus*. Singles seen by R.D.H. Simpson, e.g. Bas-Kouilou in Sep 1990 and Pointe-Noire harbour.

Cinnamon Dove *Columba larvata*. We have checked the specimen from Brazzaville mentioned in Malbrant & MacLachy (1949), which is in Paris, and found it correctly identified. The locality is unusual for a species which is essentially montane.

Emerald-spotted Wood-Dove *Turtur chalcospilos*. One pair and a single on the road between Madingo-Kayes and Lac Youbi 29 Jan 1991 (FD-L, RJD); also seen on a few occasions by PB in the coastal region.

Pied Crested Cuckoo *Oxylophus jacobinus*. Two of the race *pica* (with a white chest) at Bas-Kouilou 2 Jan 1991 (RJD).

Great Spotted Cuckoo *Clamator glandarius*. One seen by RJD at Tchissanga 4 Dec 1990.

Olive Long-tailed Cuckoo *Cercococcyx olivinus*. Very common and noisy in the Mayombe Sep-Dec, more local near the coast (flooded forest at Koubotchi). Tape-recorded (FD-L).

White-browed Coucal *Centropus superciliosus*. One well seen in savanna near Djéno 21 Jul 1991 (PB).

Maned Owl *Jubula lettii*. Very noisy in the rains, and occurring in high numbers in flooded forests of the Kouilou basin, more local in the Mayombe: for a description of the voice and densities see Dowsett-Lemaire (1992). The voice is quite unlike that described in Fry *et al.* (1988), which is in fact of male *Strix woodfordii*.

Bouvier's Fishing Owl *Scotopelia bouvieri*. Frequents the same habitat as the previous species, and also quite common (FD-L). Tape-recorded. PB also saw a specimen shot near Pointe-Indienne in Aug 1990 and a tame immature at Mango-Tandou (Jun 1991) taken from the Ntombo marsh and fed on sardines.

Bates's Nightjar *Caprimulgus batesi*. Another species characteristic of seasonally flooded forest (Ménengué, Koubotchi, Béna), with a very long calling season (Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett 1991). Tape-recorded.

Horus Swift *Apus horus*. Quite common in small numbers in the gorges of Diosso and Tchissanga, with a small proportion of the dark-rumped morph "*toulsoni*", especially in Aug-Sep. Also occasionally elsewhere (Bas-Kouilou Jul, Sounda Sep, Mpindé Apr) (FD-L, RJD, PB).

Cassin's Honeyguide *Prodotiscus insignis*. One flycatching on the edge of forest at Goumina, 16 Sep 1990 (FD-L); one near Mango-Tandou, 6 Apr 1991 (PB).

Black-throated Honeyguide *Indicator indicator*. A few heard singing in the dry forest of coastal gorges (Diosso, Tchissanga) in Aug-Sep 1990 (FD-L, RJD), and at Djéno (PB).

African Piculet *Sasia africana*. One on the edge of secondary low thicket near Mpindé 23 Dec 1990 (PB).

Greater Striped Swallow *Hirundo cucullata*. Two at Mpindé on 4 Nov 1990, among flocks of migrating swallows (*H. rustica*, *spilodera* and *rufigula*) (RJD). Their large size, pale buff rump and very indistinct streaking below clearly distinguished them from species with which they might be confused. RJD is familiar with the species in southern Africa.

South African Cliff Swallow *H. spilodera*. A few well seen in mixed swallow flock (see above) at Mpindé 4 Nov 1990 (RJD). They were clearly distinguishable from the *H. rufigula* by their lack of white in the short tail, and the mottled, not dark, chin and upper breast.

Wire-tailed Swallow *H. smithii*. Six passing over the beach at Tchissanga (5 Oct 1990) and a pair at Sounda on the Kouilou (19 Oct, FD-L).

Blue Cuckoo-Shrike *Coracina azurea*. Widespread in the Mayombe, more local near the coast (Koubotchi), often as pairs in mixed bird parties.

Ansorge's Bulbul *Andropadus ansorgei*. One tape-recorded at Goumina, in fairly untouched forest on the Kouilou River, 16 Sep 1990 (FD-L).

Icterine Bulbul *Phyllastrephus icterinus*. Widespread and common in rain and swamp forest from the sublittoral zone to the Mayombe. The vocalisations are described in Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett (1991) with the aid of sonograms; with the help of colour-ringing and playback experiments, FD-L was able to show that Chappuis's (1975) second and third tape sequences attributed to White-throated Bulbul *P. albogularis* apply instead to *P. icterinus*.

Gorgeous Bush-Shrike *Malaconotus viridis*. Two or three singers in each of three localities of coastal savanna, at Pointe-Indienne, Diosso Museum, and the road from Diosso to Mpindé, Mar 1991 to Feb 1992 (PB). The song was heard in Mar, Jul, Oct, Jan-Feb, and was tape-recorded. The habitat (overgrown cassava gardens) is atypical of the species elsewhere in Africa (e.g. Zambia and Malawi).

Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio*. A female or immature seen at Pointe-Indienne 4 Nov 1990 (FD-L, RJD), and an immature at Mpindé 16 Nov 1991 (PB).

European Oriole *Oriolus oriolus*. A female well seen at Pointe-Indienne 4 Nov 1990 (FD-L, RJD); two birds at Djéno 4 Nov 1991 (PB with D.E. Sargeant).

Red-shouldered Starling *Lamprolornis nitens*. One was well seen (and its yellow eyes noted) perched on a dead tree at Djéno 6 May 1990 (PB).

Wattled Starling *Creatophora cinerea*. One in non-breeding dress watched in a dead tree at Djéno 6 Oct 1990, and about 50 (also in eclipse plumage) feeding in cassava fields 4 km north of Djéno 21 Jul 1991 (PB).

Rufous Cane-Warbler *Acrocephalus rufescens*. A few resident in papyrus at Lac Nanga (FD-L, RJD, PB) and Lac Loufoualéba (PB).

Lemon-bellied Crombec *Sylvietta denti*. A few seen and heard in tall open canopy at Koubotchi (FD-L).

Tit-Hylia *Pholidornis rufiae*. A singing bird well seen at Goumina, and many heard there and elsewhere in the Mayombe from the Kakamoéka area to Dimonika and Col de Bamba (FD-L). The loud trilling song, illustrated spectrographically in Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett (1991), is more suggestive of Sylviidae than Remizidae.

Violet-backed Hyliota *Hyliota violacea*. One seen near Sounda in a mixed bird party 22 Jul 1990 (PB) and at Goumina 15 Sep 1990 (FD-L).

[Fernando Po Batis *Batis (minima) poensis*. The song of an unfamiliar *Batis* or *Platysteira* was heard in Oct 1990 at Goumina (FD-L); it was not possible to see the bird in the dense vegetation. From tapes kindly made available by C. Chappuis from Gabon, it seems *B. poensis* is the only possibility, but confirmation is desirable. The voice of *B. minima (sensu stricto)* is very different.]

Blue-headed Crested Flycatcher *Trochocercus nitens*. Common locally in dense forest understorey and thickets from Koubotchi to the Mayoimbe.

Rufous-bellied Tit *Parus rufiventris*. This species was identified by R. Demey (*in litt.*) in savanna bush north of Brazzaville 16 Dec 1990.

Yellow-fronted Penduline Tit *Remiz flavifrons*. Three watched at close range at Goumina, and one singing at Béna (FD-L) in Oct 1990, but this elusive species may be more widespread than these records suggest.

Mouse-brown Sunbird *Anthreptes gabonicus*. One at Djéno in riparian bush Jul 1990 and Apr 1991 (PB), and one on the edge of riparian forest on the Kouilou at Goumina in Sep 1990 (FD-L).

Reichenbach's Sunbird *Nectarinia reichenbachii*. Locally very common in low bushy vegetation over water all along the coast and inland to Lac Nanga.

Thick-billed Weaver *Amblyospiza albifrons*. Small breeding colonies established in *Typha* reed-beds at Pointe-Noire, particularly active in December (PB, FD-L, RJD); two nests in papyrus at Djéno being built in Jan, and old nests at Pointe-Indienne (PB). Breeding birds correspond to the description of the nearest known race, *saturata* from Bas-Zaïre (RJD).

Lesser Masked Weaver *Ploceus intermedius*. One male seen closely at Ménengué 28 Dec 1990 (RJD); several nests under construction in papyrus heads on the shores of Lac Nanga in Nov, and a female brooding there in Jan (FD-L).

Yellow-mantled Weaver *P. tricolor*. Seen locally in forest canopy, usually in bird parties, from Koubotchi to the Mayoimbe.

Brown-capped Weaver *P. insignis*. A specimen collected by Descarpentries & Villiers (1964) in the Chaillu Mts at Mbila, and attributed by them to Preuss's Golden-backed Weaver *P. preussi*, was re-examined by us in Paris and it appears instead to be an immature male *P. insignis*. This is an interesting addition to the other two highland

species already known from the Mayombe summit: Crossley's Ground Thrush *Zoothera (gurneyi) crossleyi* and Pink-footed Puffback *Dryoscopus angolensis* (Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett 1989).

Red-bellied Malimbe *Malimbus erythrogaster*. One well seen in a tall tree by the road at Béna 22 Nov 1990 (FD-L), and subsequently by PB (Jun and Nov 1991).

Modifications of status

From the list of birds published by Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett (1991), it is clear that the known ranges of many species have now been extended into coastal Congo.

White-throated Bee-eater *Merops albicollis*. From a review of the literature Dowsett & Dowsett-Lemaire (1989) assumed that this species was a widespread migrant in southern Congo. We, however, did not see it, and believe it is likely to be of only irregular occurrence there.

White-throated Bulbul *Phyllastrephus albigularis*. Some records by Dowsett & Dowsett-Lemaire (1989) from the Mayombe were based on sound, but FD-L became convinced in 1990 that the relevant vocalisations were in fact all of *P. icterinus* (cf. above). Therefore the only certain record we have of *P. albigularis* is a bird captured at Col de Bamba in June 1989.

Xavier's Bulbul *P. xavieri*. Chappuis's (1975) recording attributed to this species actually belongs to Serine Bulbul *Calyptocichla serina*: our 1989 records of *P. xavieri* based on voice are therefore considered invalid and the species may not occur in this part of Congo. The calls presented by Chappuis as *P. icterinus* may actually be of *P. xavieri*; some observations in Uganda by FD-L suggest this but more research is needed elsewhere, especially by tape-recording colour-ringed (measured) birds and playback experiments.

Species to be deleted from the Congo list

Grey-green Bush-Shrike *Malaconotus bocagei*. The single Congo record (Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett 1989) was based on a brief sighting of a silent individual, and was not confirmed during subsequent visits to the Mayombe. We prefer to withdraw it, although the species should eventually be found in southern Congo, given that it is already known from the Zaire side (Chapin 1954).

Preuss's Golden-backed Weaver *Ploceus preussi*. The immature specimen mentioned by Descarpentries & Villiers (1964) was re-examined by FD-L and RJD and appears in

fact to be *P. insignis* (see above). There are no other records of *P. preussi* for Congo; it is however known from the Zairean Mayombe (Schouteden 1926) and should eventually be found in southern Congo.

Hecketsweiler & Mokoko Ikonga (1991) published a small list of species from the area of the Conkouati reserve in southern Congo, based on observations in Jul-Aug 1990. A number of birds that they mention appear to be unlikely in southern Congo on account of their distribution and/or dates. The following seven species are otherwise unknown from Congo and we suggest they be rejected in the absence of substantiated records:

Garganey *Anas querquedula*. July-August are improbable months to find this Palearctic species in Congo.

Stone-Partridge *Ptilopachus petrosus*. Claimed from a forest locality in the Mayombe, this savanna bird (from the Sahel and Guinea woodland) is unknown in west-central Africa south of northern Cameroon and Central African Republic (Urban *et al.* 1986).

Red-throated Bee-eater *Merops bullocki*. This species also is unknown in west-central Africa south of Cameroon and Central African Republic, whereas its sibling *M. bullockoides*, common in Congo, is not mentioned by Hecketsweiler & Mokoko Ikonga (1991).

Swallow-tailed Bee-eater *M. hirundineus*. A savanna species, unknown in west-central Africa between Nigeria and Angola.

Tawny Pipit *Anthus campestris*. This Palearctic migrant is unknown in west-central Africa south of Nigeria and improbable there during its breeding season (Jul-Aug). The Long-legged Pipit *A. pallidiventris*, a common resident in coastal Congo, is not mentioned by Hecketsweiler & Mokoko Ikonga (1991).

Blue-headed Sunbird *Nectarinia oritis* and **Preuss's Double-collared Sunbird** *N. preussi* are both montane species, absent from western Africa south of Cameroon.

Swamp Boubou *Laniarius "ferrugineus"* of Hecketsweiler & Mokoko Ikonga (1991) should be understood as *L. bicolor* (cf. Dowsett & Dowsett-Lemaire 1980, 1989).

Discussion

The total of 500 species recorded for Congo by Dowsett & Dowsett-Lemaire (1989) now becomes 567, with 69 additions and two deletions. Most of the 15 newly recorded Palearctic migrants were to be expected except for *Charadrius alexandrinus*, the most southerly record to date (after a recent record on the Gabonese coast: Christy 1990), and

Calidris subminuta which could only be a vagrant. Of the intra-African migrants, *Hirundo cucullata* and *H. spilodera* were known to migrate to the lower Congo basin, but only the latter was known north of Zaire (to Gabon). Early November must be about the latest date for these birds to return to breeding areas in southern Africa. The observation of flocks of *Creatophora cinerea* points to very wide dispersal abilities in a species that was not previously known nearer than Luanda in central Angola (Traylor 1963).

Among forest birds, most of the new records fill gaps between southern Gabon to the north, and Cabinda/Zairean Mayombe/Angola to the south where they were already known (references in Dowsett & Dowsett-Lemaire 1989), i.e. *Tigriornis leucolophus*, *Accipiter castanilius*, *Himantornis haematopus*, *Scotopelia bouvieri*, *Prodotiscus insignis*, *Sasia africana*, *Coracina azurea*, *Pholidornis rufiae*, *Trochocercus nitens*, *Anthreptes gabonicus*, *Nectarinia reichenbachii*, *Ploceus tricolor*. Others represent southward extensions from the Gabonese forest: *Canirallus oculus*, *Jubula lettii*, *Caprimulgus batesi*, *Sylvietta denti*, *Remiz flavifrons* and *Malimbus erythrogaster*.

Of non-forest species, some were expected on the basis of wide African distribution, e.g. *Clamator* and *Oxylophus* spp., *Hirundo smithii*, *Acrocephalus rufescens*. Others must have originated from the Zambezian Region to the south: *Apus horus*, *Centropus superciliosus*, *Indicator indicator*, *Malaconotus viridis*, *Ploceus intermedius* and *Parus rufiventris*.

We feel that the coastal savannas of Congo have probably been sufficiently well explored by now, especially by PB, to suspect that the rare Loango Slender-billed Weaver *Ploceus subpersonatus* (recorded only from the Gabonese coast, Cabinda and coastal Zaire) is absent from this country; it is likely that its special habitat of clumps of bushes and palm trees on the edge of permanent pools is missing (Collar & Stuart 1985; PB's observations in Gabon). Finally, of forest species known from both sides of the Congolese Mayombe (Gabon and Bas-Zaire/Cabinda), only three have still to be found in southern Congo: *Malaconotus bocagei* and *Ploceus preussi* for which the evidence is so far unsatisfactory (see above), and the Narrow-tailed Starling *Poeoptera lugubris*.

A total of just under 570 species is still well below the potential for Congo, given the size of the country and diversity of habitats. While the south and south-west in particular are now reasonably well known, the northern forests and the savannas north of Brazzaville remain much under-explored. Over 60 species recorded by Brosset & Erard (1986) in north-east Gabon are still unknown from adjacent Congo. We hope that research can be directed there in the future.

Acknowledgments

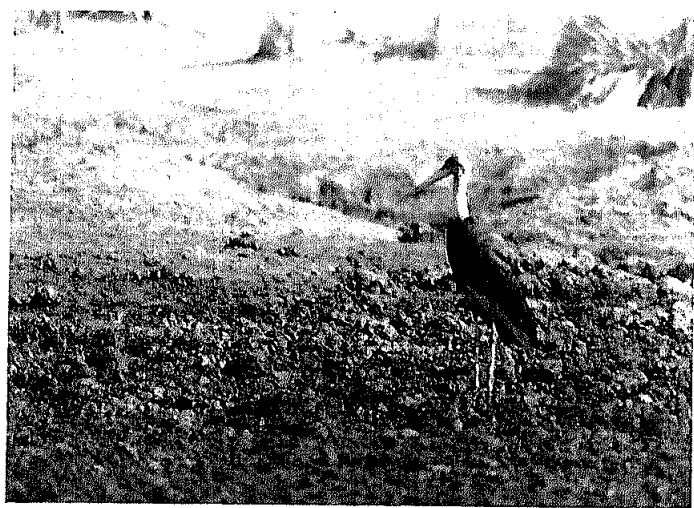
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Woolly-necked Stork – Cigogne épiscopale – *Ciconia episcopus*
Photo H.Q.P. Crick