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## NOTES ON THE BIRDS OF IVORY COAST

by J. Frank Walsh

Recently Thiollay (1985) has provided a fairly comprehensive account of the birds of Ivory Coast. However, as he points out in his introduction much remains to be learnt concerning their detailed distribution, and the changes which are currently taking place. In particular the northwest of the country has been somewhat neglected by ornithologists.

Since 1973 I have made numerous short visits to the northern half of the country, during which over 250 species of birds have been recorded. Three visits yielded the bulk of the useful observations. These were:

- i. A short stay under canvas near Leraba Gare ( $10^{\circ} 06' N$ ,  $05^{\circ} 05' W$ ), just south of the Burkina Faso border in the Leraba valley, from 19 to 24 February 1977, which gave an opportunity to observe the northernmost area of Ivory Coast at the height of the dry season.
- ii. Stays at the Gouesesso Hotel, near Biankouma ( $07^{\circ} 52' N$ ,  $07^{\circ} 40' W$ ) on 23/24 November 1984 and 9 to 11 March 1985; this hotel, in a village setting, in a patch of relict forest cum coffee plantation, must be one of the best possible for the bird-watcher in West Africa.
- iii. A stay in Odienne ( $09^{\circ} 36' N$ ,  $07^{\circ} 32' W$ ) from 18 February to 24 March 1985 proved very interesting. To the west of the town there is a small barrage, well vegetated and not much disturbed, while within the town itself there is a small valley with 4 or 5 hectares of paddy rice and vegetable gardens, both sites were very productive.

Observations which add to the data given by Thiollay (1985), or which concern species listed in Appendix G in Collar & Stuart (1985) are given below. To reduce duplication, lists are given for Leraba Gare, Gouesesso and Odienne rice paddy without further details. Other observations are dealt with in a systematic list.

Among the birds seen in the vicinity of Leraba Gare the following are perhaps worthy of note:

Neotis denhami, Merops hirundineus, Jynx torquilla, Eremopterix leucotis, Hirundo smithii (pair occupying nest under road bridge), H. griseopyga, Nilaus afer, Apalis flavida (caniceps), Parisoma plumbeum, Anthreptes gabonica (3 birds showing territorial behaviour), A. platura, Ploceus nigricollis, Petronia dentata, Pytilia phoenicoptera, Estrilda larvata, Laonosticta rufopicta (the commonest of the fire finches) and L. rara.

Among the more notable of the 73 species of birds seen at Gouesesso were:

Francolinus achantensis (numerous and noisy in November but not heard or seen in March), Psittacus erithacus, Corythaeola cristata, Eurystomus glaucurus and E. gularis (perched in same dead tree in March), Phoeniculus aterrimus, Gymnobucco calvus, Dendropicos gabonensis, Psalidoprocne obscura (March), Lamprotornis iris (November), Hyliota violacea (November), Nectarinia adelberti, N. venusta, N. superba, Ploceus nigerrimus and Lonchura bicolor.

Between 19 February and 23 March visits were paid to the Odienne rice paddy area on 13 mornings. The total bird/days for each species of the Charadriiformes is given below:

Actophilornis africana 5

Charadrius dubius 7

Tringa nebularia 1

T. glareola 137

T. ochropus 5

T. erythropus 1 (14.3.85)

Gallinago media 9

G. gallinago 2

Calidris ferruginea 1 (19.3.85)

C. minuta 3

Philomachus pugnax 12 (1 to 4 birds present on 5 days).

Rostratula benghalensis 1

Glareola pratincola 5

Sterna leucoptera 12

#### SYSTEMATIC LIST

Egretta gularis Reef Heron See Walsh (in press) for inland records

Egretta intermedia Yellow-billed Egret 1 Odienne lake  
1.3.85

Ardea goliath Goliath Heron 2 Comoe Parc 16.7.75, 5 on  
22.6.76

Ephippiorhynchus senegalensis Saddlebill Stork Seen in  
Comoe Parc in March, May, July and December. Published  
breeding records (Walsh J.F. 1977) overlooked by Thiollay.

Ibis ibis Yellow-billed Stork 1 with woolly-necked Storks  
Ciconia episcopus in Comoe Valley 08° 30' N, on 4.12.75

Pteronetta hartlaubi Harlaub's Duck 1 pr on Comoe at 08 22' N  
on 22.6.76, 3 pr on Sassandra river between 07° 50' N and 08°  
26' N on 2.3.85.

- Anas querquedula Garganey 4 pairs at Odienne dam 16.3.85
- Falco cuvieri African Hobby Near Touba (08° 22'N, 07° 42'W) on 6.3.85
- Falco subbuteo European Hobby 1 at Odienne 16 & 17.3.85
- Falco alopex Fox Kestrel 1 near Odienne on 24.2.85
- Glareola nuchalis Rock Pratincole Many on White Bandama between 08° 00'N and 08° 14'N (none further north) on 22.7.75; several Comoé river at 08° 22'N and 07° 58'N on 16.7.75, also on Nzi river in June 1979 and on the Cavally river at 06° 03'N on 31.5.79
- Sterna leucoptera White-winged Black Tern Several present Odienne dam from 23 February to 17 March 1985, maximum 10 birds
- Rynchops flavirostris African Skimmer 4 on Sanssandra river between 07° 50'N and 08° 26'N on 2.3.85
- Oena capensis Masked Dove 1 male seen near Odienne on 17.3.85
- Poicephalus robustus Brown-necked Parrot Flock of 5 birds seen at the Nzi river 08° 11'N on 20.10.74; 2 over the Bondoukou-Bouna road at about 08° 30'N on 31.12.74
- Cuculus gularis Grey Cuckoo Regularly heard and seen at Odienne lake from 23 February to 23 March, at least 3 individuals calling on latter date, suggests breeding activity likely
- Riparia riparia European Sand Martin 1 single bird in Odienne town on 19.3.85, following a period of exceptional harmattan dust
- Luscinia svecica Bluethroat A male, subspecies not determined, seen in vegetable gardens at Odienne on 26.2.85 constitutes the FIRST RECORD of this species in Ivory Coast
- Cercomela familiaris Familiar Chat A bird seen carrying material in beak on four journeys at a small inselberg near Odienne on 24.2.85 was presumably nesting
- Acrocephalus schoenobaenus Sedge Warbler This species was seen on 12 of 13 visits to the Odienne rice paddy, between 19 February and 23 March 1985, the maximum number recorded being 8 on 26 February, in all 54 bird days recorded. This species, for which Thiollay (1985) could give only one record, must occur at the many rice paddies scattered about the savanna zone, and probably overwinters there in important numbers as it does in Ghana (Walsh & Grimes 1981).

- Muscicapa aquatica Swamp Flycatcher 1 on the Kolonkoko tributary of the Comoe river at 09° 12' N, 04° 27' W on 23.1.75
- Ploceus nigricollis Spectacled Weaver 1 female at 09° 54' N, 05° 01' W on 24.1.75; several at Odienne dam 1.3.85
- Malimbus rubriceps Red-headed Weaver 3 fresh nests with 1 male seen visiting at 09° 54' N, 05° 01' W on 24.1.75; a pair seen visiting a nest near Odienne on 24.2.85, with another fresh nest seen the same day, about 5 km away
- Petronia dentata Bush Sparrow A few in Odienne area in February and March 1985; 1 single bird at Touba airfield on 13 March
- Nesocharis capistrata White-cheeked Olive-weaver 1 at Odienne dam on 3.3.85
- Pytilia pheonicoptera Red-winged Pytilia 1 pair at Odienne dam 16.3.85
- Estrilda larvata Black-faced Firefinch 1 male near Odienne 17.3.85
- Lagonosticta rufopicta Bar-breasted Firefinch Several at Kafolo village (09° 36' N, 04° 19' W) on 24.7.75
- Lagonosticta rara Black-bellied Firefinch Seen at Odienne dam on 16.3.85 and 7 km west of Odienne on 17.3.85

## SUMMARY

As a supplement to the check-list of Thiollay (1985) records of 73 species seen in Ivory Coast, including one species, the Bluethroat, new to the country and evidence of nesting activity by 5 species for which Thiollay (op. cit.) questions the status, are given.

## RESUME

Comme supplement de la check-liste de Thiollay (1985) renseignements sur 73 espèces vues à la Côte d'Ivoire, y compris une espèce nouvelle au pays, la Gorgebleue, et l'évidence de l'activité nicheuse de cinq espèces pour qui Thiollay (op. cit) mit en doute le status, sont donnés.

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