



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



**Join the WAOS and support
the future availability of free
pdfs on this website.**

<http://malimbus.free.fr/member.htm>

If this link does not work, please copy it to your browser and try again.

If you want to print this pdf, we suggest you begin on the next page (2) to conserve paper.

**Devenez membre de la
SOOA et soutenez la
disponibilité future des pdfs
gratuits sur ce site.**

<http://malimbus.free.fr/adhesion.htm>

Si ce lien ne fonctionne pas, veuillez le copier pour votre navigateur et réessayer.

Si vous souhaitez imprimer ce pdf, nous vous suggérons de commencer par la page suivante
(2) pour économiser du papier.

NOTES ON SOME BIRDS SEEN AT BUEA AND ON MOUNT
CAMEROUN. 30 DEC. 1970 - JAN. 1971.

BY

L. Grimes.

Introduction

The information on the birds of the Camerouns incorporated in Dr. Bannerman's volumes on the Birds of West Africa (Bannerman 1931-51, 1953) is mainly based on skin collections. Since this work W. Serle (1950, 1954 and 1965) has published distribution and breeding notes on most of the birds and given details of his skin collection. During the years 1947-1951 and 1955-1957 he collected about 7,000 skins and in his final paper he writes "the list of resident birds in the lowland forest and the montane forest of West Cameroun is now probably fairly complete".

My main reason for visiting Buea was to have the experience of visiting a montane forest and observing some of the birds. It was very thrilling to slowly climb through the forest armed with a tape recorder and field glasses and try to absorb and identify the new sounds. There are numerous birds recorded on the tape which were not identified in the field and so the list that follows is a poor reflection of the species present. The field notes taken were found later to add to the known breeding season of several species including that of the Little Olive Weaver Nesocharis shelleyi. To a person familiar only with the birds of the Accra plains and lowland forests of Ghana it was surprising to hear some species in the montane forest whereas in Ghana they avoid the forest and have a much more restricted range.

The itinerary and brief description of the Mountain.

I arrived at Buea on the night of 29th Dec. and next day walked through the montane forest and reached a height of 2040 m in the grassland. I returned to Buea on the same day. On 31st Dec. I spent the day in the forest and slept at Hut 1 (1830 m) and returned slowly to Buea during the afternoon of 1 Jan. I used the tape recorder on both days and reached a height of 2150 m. in the grassland. On 2nd Jan. I spent several hours in the Eucalyptus plantation near the Upper Farm (1127 m) just above Buea. On 4th Jan. I returned to Hut 1 and spent the night there going on to Hut 2 (2780 m) the following morning. I reached this by 10.00 a.m. and spent a few hours watching the birds in an area of thicket some 60 yards S.W. of Hut 2. I returned to Buea the same day. C.G. Young (1946) stayed for a similar period on the mountain and published some of his field notes to which reference is made.

The path leading to the montane forest and mountain begins at the Upper Farm. Here there are cultivated fields of maize and some grazing for cattle. Immediately above this there is extensive thicket which is dense and many shrubs were flowering. The cloud layer begins at this level at this time of year and isolated clumps of the giant fern Cyathea manniana are present. This becomes extensive at about 1550 m but peters out by 1660 m. All trees above 1400 m are covered in mosses and lichens and in the open areas of the forest, especially at the lower elevations, are clumps of the tall reedy plants Costus and Afromomum. They are also present in certain areas of Buea. Bracken becomes prominent in the forest

near the border with the grassland but it is present in the forest just above Buea. Heights were measured using an aircraft altimeter and corrected by using the more precise values of the height of Hut 1 and Hut 2 as measured by G.M.D. Guillaume (1966).

The climb from the edge of the forest to Hut 2 is steep and there are only a few stunted trees (Agauria salicifolia). The grass is waist high at the lower levels and becomes short and stunted on the higher slopes. Hut 2 lies on a partial plateau and the trees are more numerous although still well separated. Some 60 yards S.W. of Hut 2 are two areas of thicket containing two flowering shrubs: a broom (Adenecarpus manii) and a giant member of the St. John's Wort family (Hypericum lanceolatum). These areas housed many birds and were connected vegetationally to the forest below by a thin strand of shrubs running up one of the many steep sided gullies. In these gullies the cover is thin but sufficient to allow birds to reach the thicker cover near Hut 2.

The list follows the order and names as given in the volumes of Bannerman (1953).

Cattle Egret Bubulcus ibis: Present in the cultivated fields near the Upper Farm.

Black Kite Milvus migrans: Occasionally seen in the forest below the cloud layer and a few at Buea.

Red-tailed Buzzard Buteo auguralis: Two birds were regularly seen above the Upper Farm but below the forest belt but one bird was seen at Hut 2 on 5 January.

Scaly Francolin Francolinus squamatus: This was common around Buea and just above the Upper Farm.

Cameroun Mountain Francolin Francolinus camerunensis: Several francolins were heard in the forest above Hut 1 and based on the distribution notes of Serle (1965) were presumed to be this species.

Red-eyed Turtle Dove Streptopelia semitorquata: I was surprised to find this bird at Buea and also to hear it in the montane forest. My experience of this bird in Ghana is that it shuns the lowland forest and becomes common in more open country such as on certain areas of the Accra Plains.

Red-billed Wood-Dove Turtur afer: Only recorded at the Upper Farm.

Guinea Tauraco Tauraco persa: Common throughout the forest on the mountain.

Blue-Plantain-Eater Corythaecola cristata: Heard early in the morning at Hut 1, and calls heard again at dusk.

Emerald Cuckoo Chrysococcyx cupreus: One bird calling at height of 1850 m on 30 December, a few more at lower levels.

Didric Cuckoo Lampromorpha caprius: Frequently heard in the lower levels of the forest.

Klaas' Cuckoo Lampromorpha klaasi: One record of a bird calling at a height of 1530 m.

Housebird Colius striatus: A common bird in the thickets above the Upper Farm but recorded throughout the forest up to Hut 1.

Falm Swift Cypsiurus parvus: Common at Buea.

Senegal Kingfisher Halcyon senegalensis: Recorded only at Buea.

White-throated Bee-eater Aerops albicollis: Frequently recorded in the lower levels of the forest (below 1380 m), descending to lower altitudes when clouds formed.

Naked-faced Barbet Gymnobucco calvus/peli: Either or both of these species were present in the lower levels of the mountain and found right up to the forest/grassland boundary.

Lemon-rumped Tinker-Bird Pogoniulus leucolaima: Present in the Eucalyptus plantation above Buea and throughout the range of the montane forest.

Green Woodpecker Mesopicos johnstoni: Two sight records above a height of 1830 m.

Blue-headed Wagtail Budytes flava: Seen in small numbers up to the cloud layer (about 1390 m), frequently perching in trees when disturbed.

Cameroun Mountain Pipit Anthus richardi: Several pipits were disturbed as I climbed the steep grass slopes just below Hut 2 and were presumed to be this species.

Bulbul Pycnonotus barbatus: Recorded at Buea and up to Hut 1. Young recorded them flying over the grass slopes just above the forest edge.

Grey throated Bulbul Arizelocichla tephrolaema: This is the common bulbul seen throughout the vertical range of the montane forest.

Pigmy Dusky Flycatcher Alseonax adjustus: Frequently met along the path from Buea to Hut 1. One bird was building a nest in a moss covered tree at about 1220 m.

Wattle-eye Platysteira cyanea: Although in Ghana this is a bird of the savanna, it occurred throughout the height range of the montane forest. Song was frequently heard and tape recorded.

Blue Fairy Flycatcher Erannomys longicauda: A single bird was seen regularly in the garden of the house in which I stayed in Buea. Another was seen in a wooded ravine in the Eucalyptus plantation.

Kurriehaine Thrush Turdus libonyanus: Birds were seen in open clearings in the montane forest, and were present at Hut 1. There was no song.

Mountain Stonechat Saxicola torquata: Present on the grassy slopes of the mountain below Hut 2. At Hut 2 several males were singing and holding territories. One female was observed carrying food and the pair was greatly agitated by my presence. Young makes no mention of breeding activities.

Mountain Robin Chat Cossypha isabellae: Very common throughout the height range of the forest. Young fledglings were present with older birds and appeared to be family parties. Serle (1950) found family parties and spotted young in June at Manengubu. A completed clutch found on 8 September was, he believed, out of season.

Fire-crested Alethe Alethe castanea: Seen at dusk in mixed feeding groups along the path below Hut 1.

Cameroun Mountain Scrub Warbler Bradypterus barratti: The song of this bird is loud and distinctive and made up of a repetition of one note, not unlike in form the song of the green-backed Camproptera. In the forest it look a dark chocolate brown and is always on the move keeping close to the ground layer. Song was recorded at Hut 1 but also heard in the Eucalyptus plantation.

Cameroun Swamp-Warbler Bradypterus camerunensis: A few birds were resident in the high reedy grass areas near the General Hospital at Buea. The song was recorded and played back to the birds which brought them within 5 yards of the tape recorder. Evidently the birds were holding territories for they were heard each morning and evening from the same areas. When they are agitated there is a characteristic wing snapping when they make their short flights and while they flew they also sang. The wing snapping was also recorded on tape.

Jackson's Bush-Warbler Apalis jacksoni: One male was seen in the canopy at 1500 m.

Green longtail Urolais epichlora: A common bird in the Eucalyptus plantation as well as the montane forests. Very active while feeding and frequently in song.

White-tailed Warbler Poliolais lopesi: A fairly common bird with a short but very beautiful song. Seen in the Eucalyptus plantation but also throughout the height range of the forest. The bird generally keeps to the lower thicket but occasionally forages for short distances up the sides of trees

Chattering Grass Warbler Cisticola anonyma: A common bird in the short grass areas and open waist areas at Buea. Ascending only to about 1090 m.

Brown-backed Grass Warbler Cisticola discolor: Common from the level of the Upper Farm throughout the forest. Could be heard singing in the ravines as I climbed the grass land and again several pairs singing in the thickets near to Hut 2. Around Hut 1 there were at least 3 pairs holding territories. Both birds and frequently a third may join in the singing. The song of a pair appears to be synchronized.

European Swallow Hirundo rustica: Present at the Upper Farm.

Rough Winged Swallow Psalidoprocne fuliginosa: A common bird found near the water fall above Buea, throughout the forest and seen again at 2780 m at Hut 2. Young also recorded a similar height distribution.

Mackinnons Grey Shrike Lanius mackinnoni: Present in gardens at Buea and in the lower slopes of the mountain below the cloud layer.

Yellow-breasted Shrike Laniarius atroflavus: Common in the forest areas up to the border with the grasslands. The calls and the answers of the second bird of a pair are remarkably similar in structure and form to that of Laniarius barbarus.

Black Mountain Boubou Laniarius poensis: During early morning and late afternoon the calls of this bird were frequently heard around Hut 1 and at lower heights in the forest.

Sooty Boubou Laniarius leucorhynchus: Birds thought to be of this species were seen in the thickets just above Buea but before the forest began.

Oriolus species On several occasions oriole call notes were heard but the birds were not seen.

Pied Crow Corvus alba: Occasionally seen at Buea.

Splendid Glossy Starling Lamprocolius splendidus: Several birds seen flying high over Buea in the early morning. Was first attracted by the very raucous call notes. Single birds were seen in trees near the administrative buildings above Buea. The white eye and call note are very distinctive field characteristics.

Preuss's Mountain Starling Onychognathus walleri: A group of three birds seen in the high canopy of about 1480 m.

Green White-eye Zosterops virens: Frequently seen in small parties in the forest around about the level of 1900 m.

Black-capped Speirops Speirops lugubris: An unusual bird found in small parties in thickets near Hut 2. The picture in Bannerman does not do the bird justice. In the field the striking feature is the strong dagger like bill and the various shades of grey of the plumage. The head looks as if it has a grey black cap and the face is of a much lighter grey. The bill is a grey white as well as the legs appearing as if the colour had faded. The white throat extends a little way down the central breast and this is flanked with grey. They have a rattling call note. The bill is quite dagger like and the bird frequently stabbed at the back of the shrubs while hanging upside down. The white feathers around the eye are by no means as prominent in the field as Bannerman suggests.

Double-collared Sunbird Cinnyris reichenowi: Present from Buea right through the forest up to Hut 2 at 2780 m. A very common bird with males singing everywhere. Two nests (one with 2 eggs and the other with 2 young) were found overhanging the path leading through the forest. Very common at the open area around Hut 1, frequently perching on the buildings as well as on low shrubs. Very pugnacious and there is much chasing of other males. Birds were confined to the thicket areas near Hut 2 associating with Speirops, Oriole-finch and the Black and Yellow Weaver.

Blue-headed Sunbird Cyanomitra oritis Recorded near Hut 1 at 1830 m and also in the Eucalyptus Plantation above Buea.

Collared Sunbird Anthreptes collaris: Present at Buea in gardens of houses and also on the lower slopes of the mountain just above the Upper Farm.

Olive-backed Sunbird Cyanomitra verticalis: Present in gardens at Buea regularly visiting flowering shrubs at dawn each day.

Olive-bellied Sunbird Cinnyris chloropygius: Found at Buea and in flowering shrub area above the Upper Farm.

Grosbeak Seed-Eater Poliospiza burtoni: Seen only above or near Hut 1, Song was recorded near Hut 1 and two birds seen feeding on two separate mornings in the same tree at about 1950 m.

Oriole-finch Linurgus olivaceus: Very common from the lower levels just above Buea (Eucalyptus plantation), through the forest and in the thickets at Hut 2 (2780 m). Males were singing throughout the forest. A female was watched building a nest low down in a small tree just before the forest level (1350 m). The male accompanied the female while she collected material and sang near the nest site while she built the nest. Serle found gonads enlarged in October and November but according to Bannerman (1953) breeding continues until January.

Grey headed Sparrow Passer griseus: Present at Buea.

Baglafaecht Weaver Othyphantes baglafaecht: Males and females were in full breeding dress and two nests were found. The ring of one nest was in the frond of a giant fern at 1600 m. The female was nearby while the male built the nest. She frequently visited the ring while he was away. On one occasion while the female was at the ring the male visited the nest and displayed hanging upside down from the bottom of the ring. There was a little wing beating but not as intense as in others of the Floceus group (e.g. Village Weaver). Another nest was found near Hut 1 which had the outer fabric complete and was suspended from a shrub. The nest had a suggestion of a spout with the entrance near the top. Bannerman (1953) mentions nests only for September and October.

Black Mountain Weaver Heterophantes melanogaster: Present in the Eucalyptus Plantation above Buea, at 1500 m and at Hut 1. A male was constructing a nest in a "fir" tree in front of Hut 1, but was not observed to display at the nest. The female only visited the nest after the male had left it. Bannerman (1953) mentions some breeding data but gives no details of period.

Vieillot's Black Weaver Melanopteryx nigerrimus: At least two colonies in Eucalyptus trees in the Administrative area of Buea. Nests were being constructed and coition was observed. Adults frequently feeding in corn fields near the Upper Farm.

Uganda Spectacled Weaver Hyphanturgus ocularius: A family group visited the garden of the house in which I stayed each morning. The shrill tremulous song is distinctive and was recorded on tape. Also heard at Hut 1.

Black and Yellow Bishop Euplectes capensis: Throughout the grassland area and up to Hut 2. Males were in breeding dress and coition was observed.

Yellow-mantled Wydah Coliuspasser macrourus: Adult male in breeding plumage seen at Buea.

Blue-billed Mannikin Spermestes poenis: Several pairs seen in the lower slopes of the forest.

Grey-crowned Negro-finch Nigrita canicapilla: Song frequently heard throughout the lower range of the montane forest.

Blue-billed Weaver Spermophaga haematina: One pair in the Eucalyptus plantation and one again at about 1830 m in the montane forest.

Orange-cheeked Waxbill Estrilda melpoda: Only found at Buea in the cultivated maize fields near the Upper Farm.

Black crowned Waxbill Estrilda nonnula: A very common waxbill seen at Buea and upwards through the forest to the shrubs at Hut 2. Bannerman (1953) mentions 2438 m (8000ft) as the limit of the height range.

Little Olive Weaver Nesocharis shelleyi: A beautiful small weaver seen first at a height of 1350 m but found up to 1800 m or more. A nest containing 3 small white eggs was found at 1730 m. At first I thought it was a sunbirds nest as it was similar in size and structure and suspended from the end of an overhanging branch. Visits on subsequent days proved the clutch to be 3 eggs. It was only on the last day that the incubating female was seen leaving the nest.

Pintailed Wydah Vidua macroura: One male in full breeding plumage was seen regularly in the lower levels of the first.

References Quoted

Bannerman, D.A., 1931-51. The Birds of Tropical West Africa. 8 Vols.
1953. The Birds of West and Equatorial Africa, 2 Vols

Guillaume, G.M.D., 1966. Notes on the Cameroun Mountain. Gov. Printers Buea.

Serle, W., 1950. A contribution to the ornithology of the British Cameroun. Ibis 92: 343-376, 602-638.

1954. A second contribution to the ornithology of the British Cameroun. Ibis 96: 47-80.

1965. A third contribution to the ornithology of the British Cameroun.

Ibis 107: 60-94, 230-246.

Young, C.G., 1946. Notes on some birds of the Cameroun Mountain district. Ibis 88: 348-382.