



**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.

SOKOTO PROVINCE

(2) Wurno ($13^{\circ} 15' N$, $05^{\circ} 25' E$)

By

P.J. Mundy & A.W. Cook

Wurno is 25 miles N.E. of Sokoto along a fairly good laterite road. The town itself is built on fossil-rich sedimentary rocks, and is south of the Rima fadama. A mile-long raised track continues eastward from the town, and leads directly to the artificial wall that serves to hold Wurno lake.

The lake is now about 6 sq. miles in area, and is approx. 6 miles long and 1 mile wide. During the year the water level drops about 10 feet, and then large grassy areas are exposed near to the wall. The excess water for irrigation escapes through a spillway. Downstream of the wall are large areas of irrigated crops, particularly rice, onions and carrots. The rice supports hundreds of duck and thousands of weavers, especially Queleas, and Yellow Crowned Bishops. Throughout the dry season two marshy pools remain in the downstream part, whereas during and after the rains this whole area comes under nearly 6 feet of water.

The vegetation cover is meagre, there being a very small number of trees dotted about. In the lake immediately to the north of the spillway is a fairly substantial area of shrub and grass, especially tussocks, which is the first part to be exposed when the water level starts falling.

We have visited Wurno lake several times throughout the year since February 1970, and to date (July 1971) we have noted 89 species there, of which 26 are Palearctic migrants. John Broadbent and his wife went there in April 1971 and observed another 5 species of which 3 were migrant (pers. comm.). In his recent article, Sir F.W. Pedler (1970) recorded another 2 species (definitely) of which one was a migrant. Hence one third of the bird varieties are winter migrants, and it can be seen that the new lake is having a great influence on the passage of these birds. It should be said that almost all the migrant species mentioned here have been recorded along the two rivers very close to Sokoto town, where indeed we have seen more; but this effect is probably due to more frequent observation around Sokoto than at Wurno.

Our major regret is that we haven't as yet been able to visit the far side of the lake.

Pelecaniformes:

The Long-tailed Shag Phalacrocorax africanus is always present, once numbering 50 in November. The Grey Pelican Pelecanus rufescens is present whilst breeding in Sokoto town (i.e. August to March).

Ciconiiformes:

A large variety, though we have never seen the Goliath Heron Ardea goliath recorded by Pedler (op. cit.). Grey Heron A. cinerea, Black-headed A. melanocephala, Purple A. purpurea (no significant increase in numbers during the northern winter), African Great White Egretta alba, Little Egret E. garzetta, Cattle Egret Ardeola ibis, Squacco A. ralloides, Green-backed Butorides striatus, African Little Bittern Ixobrychus minutus are always present.

The Wood Ibis Ibis ibis is occasional, numbering 40 in July, of which only 5 were in the fully adult pink plumage. The Sacred Ibis Threskiornis aethiopia and the West African Hadada Bostrychia hagedash are normally present, both occurring in groups of about 50 in November. One Glossy Ibis Plegadis falcinellus was seen in April (Broadbent). The Open Bill Stork Anastomus lamelligerus is a dry season visitor (actually seen in February and March), in numbers of 4 or 5.

Anseriformes:

As the lake is too large to see flocks of duck easily, and their toleration distance is, when we are in a boat, about 200 yards we have been singularly unsuccessful in identifying many. Of the 16 species that Bannerman (1953) states visit the area, we have seen eight. Garganey Anas querquedula are very numerous, especially amongst the rice. Pintail A. acuta were scarce last dry season. The White-faced Duck Dendrocygna viduata is common during the wet season, but the Fulvous Duck D. bicolor has only been seen in November (about 50 birds). All the geese are present at one time or another, the Pygmy Nettapus auritus occasionally, the Knob-bill Sarkidiornis melanota in the dry season (especially February to beginning of July when there were at least 50), the Egyptian Alopochen aegyptiaca in April (Broadbent) and July, and the Spurwing Plectropterus gambensis throughout the year with about 200 feeding on the exposed grass on July 1st.

Falconiformes:

The Hooded Vulture Neophron monachus, Black Kite Milvus migrans, and Black-shouldered Kite Elanus caeruleus are resident in small numbers, the Black Kite nesting there. We always see about 10 Black-shouldered Kites. The Abyssinian Lanner Falco biarmicus, Red-necked Falcon F. chicquera and Chanting Goshawk Melierax metabates are rarely seen.

The Palearctic migrants visiting Wurno are the European Kestrel F. tinnunculus, Marsh Harrier Circus aeruginosus, "ringtail" harriers (one male of the Pale Harrier C. macrourus seen) and Osprey Pandion haliaetus (once only in March).

Galliformes:

The Bush Fowl Francolinus bicalcaratus was seen once in July before the rains.

Ralliformes:

The African Moorhen, Gallinula chloropus is always seen especially in November when the place is marshy. The Black Crake Limnocorax flavirostra and Allen's Gallinule Porphyrio alleni are rarely seen.

Gruiformes:

The Lilytrotter Actophilornis africana is always very numerous. Despite careful observation we have never seen a Lesser Lilytrotter Microparra capensis.

Charadriiformes:

The Spurwing Plover Vanellus spinosus is a fairly numerous resident. The dry season visitors are many, but without doubt the commonest is the Ruff Philomachus pugnax in its thousands. Their legs vary in colour from greenish to orange and we are sure that these are the birds that Pedler (op. cit.) observed. The flocks are interesting to watch wheeling about as one. Some individuals (2 or 3 per 1,000) are very white in colour, though not albinos.

A few individuals of the Lesser Ringed Plover Charadrius dubius, Little Stint Calidris minuta, Black-winged Stilt Himantopus himantopus, Common Sandpiper Tringa hypoleucos, Wood T. glareola, Green T. ochropus, Marsh T. stagnatilis and Greenshank T. nebularia are present during the northern winter. The Redshank T. totanus, Dusky Redshank T. erythropus, Black-tailed Godwit Limosa limosa and Common Snipe Gallinago gallinago are seen less frequently. The Stilt (3), Greenshank (30), Marsh Sandpiper (20), Dusky Redshank (5 black birds) and Black-tailed Godwit (10 but not in summer plumage) were seen on July 1st. We have not seen the Curlew Sandpiper Calidris ferruginea observed by Pedler (op. cit.).

The Egyptian Plover Pluvianus aegyptius is common outside the wet season.

6 Lesser Black-backed Gulls Larus fuscus were seen on the open water on March 19.

Although we have difficulty with terns the West African Little Tern Sterna albifrons is regularly seen, and the White-winged Black Tern (?) S. leucoptera in March.

Columbiformes:

The Speckled Pigeon Columba guinea and Niger Mourning Dove Streptopelia decipiens are residents. The Namaqua Oena capensis is present in twos or threes during the dry season. The Black-billed Wood Dove Turtur abyssinicus was seen once in March.

Strigiformes:

The Marsh Owl Asio capensis has been seen in March (group of 8) and July (1).

Cuculiformes:

The Senegal Coucal Centropus senegalensis is resident in small numbers.

Cypseliformes:

The Palm Swift Cypsiurus parvus is resident.

Coraciiformes:

The Abyssinian Roller Coracias abyssinica is present in small numbers throughout the dry season.

The Pied Kingfisher Ceryle rudis is resident, always about 10 being seen. The Malachite Alcedo cristata was seen once in April (Broadbent).

The Least Bee-eater Merops pusillus is resident. The Carmine M. nubicus seems to be a dry season bird, especially common in April. We have never seen the Red-throated Bee-eater M. bulocki closer to Sokoto than Lake Natu (60 miles south).

Passeriformes:

The following are resident - Crested Lark Galerida cristata, Zitting Cisticola C. juncidis, Ethiopian Swallow Hirundo aethiopica, Pied Crow Corvus albus, Blue-eared Glossy Starling Lamprotornis chalybaeus, Grey-headed Sparrow Passer griseus, Village Weaver Ploceus cucullatus, Black-faced lioch Quelea quelea, Orange and Yellow-crowned Bishops Euplectes afer and orix, Silverbill Lonchura malabrica and Senegal Firefinch Iagonosticta senegala. The Chestnut-backed Finch Lark Bremopterix leucotis, Ant Chat Myrmecocichla aethiops, Piapiac Ptilostomus afer, Chestnut-bellied Starling Spreo pulcher, Rock Bunting Emberiza tahapisi, Quail Finch Ortygospiza atricollis and Black-rumped Waxbill Estrilda troglodytes are rarely seen.

The following migrants visit the area - Yellow Wagtail Motacilla flava (hundreds, though we haven't found a roost), Wheatear O. oenanthe (very few), Sedge and Reed-warblers Acrocephalus schoenobaenus and scirpaceus (Broadbent), Sand Martin Riparia riparia (only seen in Nov. and presumably the European) and Woodchat Lanius senator (regularly).

We have never seen the Pied-winged Swallow Hirundo leucosoma anywhere near Sokoto and suggest that the sight record (by Pedler op. cit.) could have been the European House Martin Delicon urbica. Similarly, every Oxnecker Baphagus africanus seen around Sokoto, though we haven't seen them at Wurno, has the usual yellow and red bill. We don't believe that any of the East African variety come this far, and suggest that an all-red bill was an effect of the red sunsets we often get here.

SOKOTO PROVINCE

3. KOTORKOSHI (12° 07' N, 06° 48' E)

By

P.J. Mundy & A.W. Cook

This village is on the Zaria-Sokoto road, about 100 miles N. of Zaria. Behind the village, i.e. to the E., is a series of inselbergs forming an impressive backdrop. The one immediately to the E. is the highest and largest, approximately oval in shape with a "crater" in the middle. There are several screes around the perimeter and all offer precarious hold to a large number of trees and shrubs, which together form a fair amount of vegetational cover. There is a permanent spring at the base of the rock on its W. side near the tiny village of Kura.

This whole area, especially the large inselberg, provides a habitat for a number of very interesting birds and here we consider eight of them. In addition there are resident bands of Baboon (up to 20 individuals) and Red Patas monkey.

Abdim Stork Ciconia abdimii: arrives by the beginning of June. On 9th August we counted about 40 nests in baobab trees growing in the compounds of Kura. The stork is always seen at Talata Mafara (80 miles towards Sokoto) throughout the wet season (June-September there) and odd individuals even reach Sokoto itself for a day or two, presumably from this colony. In 1970 we saw the first stork in Sokoto on 26th June and in 1971 on 28th June.

Ruppell's Griffon Gyps ruppellii: we have watched this bird in February of 1970 and 1971. It nests on the precipice forming the West face of the inselberg, overlooking Kotorkoshi itself and almost directly underneath the trig. point. In both years we counted about 25 birds and this year we saw 3 fluffy chicks, but unfortunately our photographs were of poor quality. Next season we hope to reach the nest sites themselves by rope. Thirty years ago Dr. Serle (1943) recorded about 100 of these vultures on the rock.

Apparently the locals regard the birds as palatable and do shoot them on occasions, and we have seen griffon wings on the "medicine - and - magic" stall in Sokoto market. They also say that the vulture is resident throughout the year but we have never seen it in the wet season.

Whilst brooding, the adults stand over their young with outspread wings to protect them against the strong sun. They easily chase off any ambitious Pied Crow Corvus albus or Fox Kestrel Falco alopex.

Fox Kestrel Falco alopex: perhaps three pairs are resident here and come to holes in the cliff face, one of which is very near to the griffons' site. They seem to spend a lot of time perched on the rocks,

and also on trees in the early morning.

Stone Partridge Ptilopachus petrosus: always many (up to 50) seen or heard. However to pinpoint their whereabouts is difficult as their calls reverberate around the rock masses so much. On one occasion in February we watched 2 separate groups, of about a dozen birds each, meet on a surface and they both set up a tremendous clamour for several minutes. They then disappeared in opposite directions.

Violet Plantain Eater Musophaga violacea: always 2 or 3 fleetingly seen in the trees on the North scree.

White-crowned Cliff Chat Myrmecocichla cinnamomeiventris: always a few seen, especially around the water at the spring. In February we have seen their most active behaviour - males chasing females and displaying around them (i.e. flying and dancing). Is this courtship - though it would be rather early for the genus?

Red-throated Rock Martin Hirundo fuligula: always many seen gliding along the faces and softly tweetering. They are best viewed from above.

Neumann's Chestnut-winged Starling Onycognathus morio: often up to 25 are seen flying from one end of the rock to the other through the trees on the North scree. Frequently they cling to the rock face. They are difficult to watch owing to their habit of flying a long distance at one go. Consequently we have not seen any courtship or nesting behaviour. They seem to be resident here throughout the year.

REFERENCES:

- Bannerman, D.A. 1953. Birds of West and Equatorial Africa: London Oliver & Boyd.
Pedler, F.W. 1970. Bull. Niger. Orn. Soc. 7: 59-61.
Serle, W. 1943. Ibis 85:

.....

A RECORD OF SOME BIRDS OBSERVED ON A TOUR OF DAHOMEY AND NIGER

BY

Netta Robinson

On June 4th, 1971 I accompanied my husband on a working tour of Dahomey and Niger. We were on the road for three weeks. From Lome we travelled east to Cotonou and then North through Parakou and Angara-Debou to cross the Niger at Malanville to Gaya and on to Niamey. From Niamey we headed east through Dosso, Dogondoutchi and Birni N'Konni to Galmi