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Société d'Ornithologie de l'Ouest  
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PALAEARCTIC RUFOUS SCRUB-ROBIN: NEW TO NIGERIA - The Rufous Scrub-Robin *Cercotrichas galactotes* has one race *minor* in the semi-arid belt to the south of the Sahara and three races north of the Sahara, around the Mediterranean *galactotes*, in the Near East *syriacus* and in Transcaucasia *familiaris*. Elgood, Sharland & Ward (1966) stated that the large resident population of *C. g. minor* in northern Nigeria is evidently not augmented by Palaearctic migrants in the dry season. *C. g. galactotes* vacates its breeding region in winter, and although it has been recorded previously in West Africa from Niger, Mali and Senegal, Moreau (1972) considered those records too few to account for the entire population of this migratory race.

On the morning of 2 November 1978 a Rufous Scrub-Robin which I believe to belong to the Palaearctic race *C. g. galactotes* was netted near a spreading hedge of *Acacia ataxacantha* on abandoned farmland at Bayero University, Kano. The bird was noticeably larger than any individual of the African race *C. g. minor* which I had previously handled, having a wing length of 92 mm and a weight of 24.5 g, which are both outside the ranges of seven *C. g. minor* netted at the same location (wing 77 to 83 mm, weight 16.0 to 21.0 g). It may be of interest to note that this bird was in moult, with primaries 1-3 new, 4 and 5 growing, and the first secondary in pin in both wings. The outer tail feathers were also growing.

The bird was assigned to the race *C. g. galactotes* on the basis of its wing length (equal to the maximum quoted by Mackworth-Praed & Grant, 1970-73, for *galactotes* but beyond the maximum of 90 mm for *syriacus* and the known wintering areas of the three northern races. *C. g. familiaris* which winters in Iraq, Arabia and northeastern Africa is extremely unlikely to occur in Nigeria. *C. g. galactotes*, as previously noted, seems to winter in the western *sahel* zone, whereas the main wintering area of *syriacus* is northeastern and eastern Africa with a single record from the eastern Congo (Mackworth-Praed & Grant 1970-73, Moreau 1972). Although Mackworth-Praed & Grant note that *syriacus* is 'above darker and browner than the nominate race and greyer below', these criteria could not be used without either reference skins or previous knowledge of these races.

#### Reference

MOREAU, R.E. (1972) *The Palaearctic-African Bird Migration Systems*. Academic Press, London and New York

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UNUSUAL CONCENTRATION OF EUPLECTES ORIX NESTS IN MILLET - When a pipeline right-of-way was cut through a field at the Ahmadu Bello University Farm, Zaria, Nigeria, in October 1977, its *miawa* millet crop was found to have an unusually dense concentration of nests of Red Bishops *Euplectes orix*. The closely ("forage") planted millet had produced numerous stalks 10-17 cm apart, ideal for nest supports,

and nest density appeared to be at least ten times greater than in wild grasses along nearby Bomo Lake. The previous month the farm manager had counted as many as 82 male *E. orix* in the field. Such a density of nests would probably mean much bird damage to the crop; simple intercropping or wider spacing of the plants would spoil them as nest sites and thereby reduce potential damage.

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EARLY BREEDING OF SPUR-WINGED PLOVER - A Spur-winged Plover *Vanellus spinosus* was flushed from a nest on a mud flat at Makwaye (University Farm) Lake at Samaru, Zaria, Nigeria, on 28 March 1977 - although both Mackworth-Praed & Grant and Bannerman give the breeding season of this species in northern Nigeria as May-June. The nest contained four eggs, the usual clutch. By next day the passage of a herd of cows had obliterated nest and contents.

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LA TOURTERELLE DES BOIS DANS L'EXTREME OUEST-AFRICAINE - La Tourterelle des Bois *Streptopelia turtur* est un visiteur de la zone paléarctique. Il n'est pas possible d'évaluer la population de la Tourterelle des Bois de la même façon que pour les canards par exemple. Toutefois, comme cette espèce se rassemble le soir en dortoirs, on peut se faire quelque idée de son importance. Un dortoir près de Richard-Toll, en mars, en rassemblait quelque 450,000. Il faut y ajouter les dortoirs que l'on rencontre le long de la vallée du Sénégal, comme en témoignent les observations que nous pûmes faire au cours de nos déplacements. Il s'agirait donc, au vu du dortoir observé à Richard-Toll et des vols rencontrés dans la Vallée, d'une population de plusieurs millions. De manière générale, la Tourterelle des Bois ne paraît pas s'éloigner beaucoup de l'eau. Au Sénégal, c'est avant tout une tourterelle de la Vallée; elle exploite les champs de mil après la moisson et montre une prédilection particulière pour les rizières.

MIGRATION Le passage post-nuptial est assez discret. Il est également précoce puisque les premières tourterelles furent observées à Richard-Toll le 24 juillet 1964 et également le 24 juillet 1971 (par dizaines cette année-là). Fin août, on l'observe commune, particulièrement dans les rizières où elle trouve encore des Graminées épiées. Nous trouvons aussi cette espèce en octobre, novembre et décembre à proximité des mares du Ferlo, vaste plaine aride au sud du Fleuve, mais seulement les années où les mares pluviales (dont le remplissage dépend du déroulement de la saison des pluies) gardent encore de l'eau. Ce sont ces observations qui nous ont fait écrire (Morel & Roux, 1968) que *S. turtur* se disperse pour hiverner dans le Ferlo, situation qui se rencontre en effet certaines années pour une partie de la population.