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Société d'Ornithologie de l'Ouest
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KAGORO FOREST CONSERVATION STUDY by R. Wilkinson and R. Beecroft (1988), 81 pp. Study Report 28, ICBP, Cambridge. £5 from ICBP, 32 Cambridge Road, Girton, Cambridge, CB3 0PJ, U.K.

'Kagoro with its hills and forests is an area of outstanding importance with regard to its scenic beauty and wealth of habitats, plants and animals. The whole area deserves protection so that it may be enjoyed by future generations'. The authors of this report have made a good case to support these conclusions.

The Kagoro area lies on the south-west edge of the Jos plateau and is subject to heavy rainfall from the moisture-laden winds that rise up rapidly upon hitting the plateau's escarpment. In some of the valleys are small patches of moist forests that are relics of more extensive forests that apparently covered the region 8,000 years ago. An expedition to the area in 1987, endorsed by ICBP and the Nigerian conservation Foundation, undertook aerial and ground surveys for birds and other fauna and flora, undertook mist-netting and attempted to document the types of disturbance that occur in the forest.

The moist forests of this area are unique in Nigeria because of their position so far north in the savannah zone. They contain two species of bird found nowhere else in the country: the Red-capped Robin Chat Cossypha natalensis and the Purple-throated Cuckoo-Shrike Campephaga quiscalina, and one species only recently found also in south-west Nigeria: the Yellow-throated Green Cuckoo Chrysococcyx flavigularis. There are populations of a whole suite of interesting forest birds, from Giant Plantain-eater Corytheola cristata to Bluebill Spermophaga haematina. In addition to collating all available information on birds, the expedition documented large troops of Mona Monkeys Cercopithecus mona, produced an inventory of the flora and collated unpublished observations on the unique Charaxid butterfly fauna. Details are included in the 16 Appendices, including one on a visit to the White Pelican Pelecanus onocrotalus colony at Wase Rock.

The forests are being whittled away at an alarming rate by forestry, wood-cutting, cultivation, hunting, livestock grazing, fire and palm-wine tapping. There is sufficient legislation to control these activities but, as so often, there are insufficient funds to enforce them. Some of the forest reserves (none of this area is a wildlife reserve) in Kagoro are not properly demarcated and a major moist forest lies unprotected between two of the reserves. The authors call for immediate steps to remedy the situation and propose that a buffer zone of savannah be placed around the forests and the riverine corridors that connect them. There would then be considerable scope for allowing the sustainable use of the forests as reservoirs of the edible and medicinal plants that are so interestingly documented by H.D. Onyechusin in Appendix 5 of the report.

I sincerely hope that rapid action will be taken by Nigeria in response to this excellent report before the forests disappear.