



**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.

## TWO POPULATIONS OF CLIFF-CHATS IN THE ARLI-PENDJARI REGION

by Arthur A. Green

Received 25 June 1980

Revised 16 July 1980

In recent years the Cliff-Chat *Myrmecocichla cinnamomeiventris* has been considered as comprising seven subspecies (White 1962). Three occur in West Africa where *coronata* has been treated as a separate species by some authors (Bannerman 1953, Mackworth-Praed & Grant 1973). Others have agreed with White (Hall & Moreau 1970, Morel & Serle 1977). Inevitably, for a bird with such specialised habitat as inselbergs, the distribution is disjunct and the well marked forms have hitherto appeared to be separated by extensive tracts of unsuitable country.

The Cliff-Chat is found on many of the rocky escarpments in the vicinity of Arli (Upper Volta) and Pendjari (Benin) National Parks (Green & Sayer 1979). Hall & Moreau (1970) described only the white-crowned form *M. c. coronata* from this area. The black-crowned forms *bambarae* and *cavernicola* are supposed to have restricted ranges west of Upper Volta. In Figure 1 are shown five sites where I have seen Cliff-Chats in the Arli-Pendjari region.

In the early 1970s I first found black headed Cliff-Chats on Pagou (Fig 1: A). Soon afterwards I found white-crowned ones along the footpath across Gobnangou Plateau (B) between Arli and Diaboandi villages - only 10 km from Pagou. In 1974 I found black-crowned chats about 30 km to the southwest, on the high cliffs next to Tambarga village (C). During the rainy seasons of 1977-79 I frequently observed black headed chats along the footpath climbing the Atacora escarpment between Koualegou and Tiafarga (D) south of Pendjari Park near Batia village. J. A. Sayer informed me that he had seen white-crowned birds on that escarpment 37 km to the northeast near Bondjagou Forest (E), in the mid-1970s, and I myself observed them there in June 1979.

In going through field notes to prepare reports during 1978, I began to wonder whether the black headed birds were females of the white-crowned form. I resolved that question to my satisfaction when I returned to the Tambarga cliffs (C) in March 1979: I observed several pairs of Cliff-Chats - dull coloured females and glossy males - and none exhibited any sign of white on the head.

There is one other report of both white- and black-crowned forms being found together, in Nigeria. Gray (1966) reported that in June 1966 he saw a female and two males of the black headed form at 1000 m elevation on the approach road to Obudu Plateau, and nearby were white-crowned Cliff-Chats at 1400 m.

Black-crowned birds have been seen in the Arli-Pendjari region at sites A, C and D; white-crowned ones at B and E. There are too few

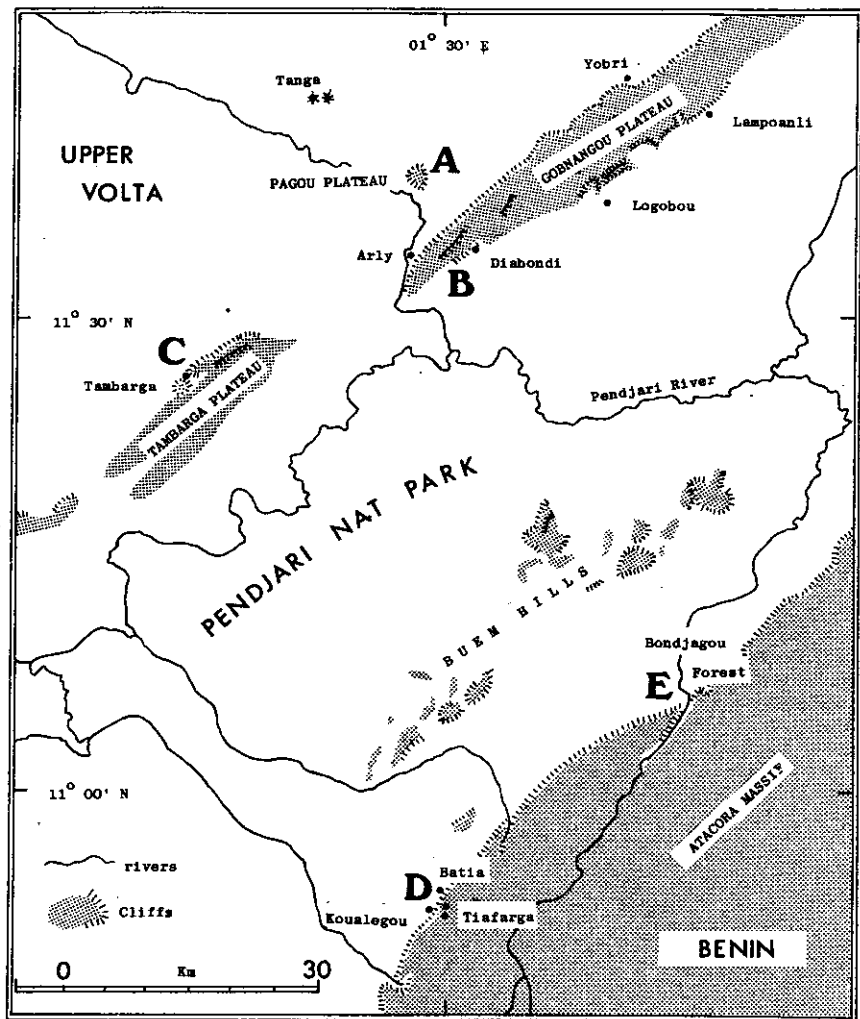


Figure 1. Map of Arli-Pendjari region showing 'black-crowned' localities (A,B,C) and 'white-crowned' localities (D,E).

observations at this point to say that there is real spatial separation, although that seems unlikely. If both forms occur throughout the area they must be morphs of a single species, or two quite separate species.

The inselbergs of Tanga and Linga, the Gobnangou escarpment from Arli to Yobri and from Logobou to Lampoanli, certain of the Buem hills in Pendjari Park, and the many cliffs of the Atacora Range should be searched. A record of seasonality might prove important. Perhaps a few specimens of each form should be collected to compare with the known races from West Africa.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to Frank J. Walsh and C. H. Fry for their criticism and numerous suggestions to a draft of this note, and I thank Jeffrey A. Sayer for his criticism of an earlier draft and for his encouragement in the field.

#### REFERENCES

- GRAY, H.H. (1966) Preliminary notice of the Bambara Cliff-Chat in Nigeria. *Bull. Niger. Orn. Soc.* 3 (10): 48
- GREEN, A.A. & SAYER, J.A. (1979) The birds of Pendjari and Arli National Parks (Benin and Upper Volta). *Malimbus* 1: 14-28