

Confirmation of Greyish Eagle Owl *Bubo cinerascens* for Mauritania

Lamarche (1988, p. 85) wrote the following about the occurrence in Mauritania of what was then regarded as a subspecies of Spotted Eagle Owl, *Bubo africanus cinerascens*: “Frequents the rocky areas and cliffs and wooded areas, generally south of 16°N. Occasionally occurs a bit further north (17°N) in the Assaba and Affolé Massifs, favouring stands of trees and ravines and floodplains. Small numbers. Nesting: observed in the south of the Affolé in May–June, not checked.” Because Greyish Eagle Owl had been reported by only a single observer, without any observational details given, Isenmann *et al.* (2010) did not include it in their list of species confirmed for Mauritania, but mentioned it in an appendix of species not retained, saying “Presumed resident breeder, probably rare and restricted to woodland areas of southernmost Sahelian Mauritania (Guidimaka).” We here document three observations of Greyish Eagle Owl from Mauritania in 2000 and 2001, which support Lamarche’s remarks about the species and confirm its occurrence in Mauritania.

On 2 March 2000, JB was in Ayoun el Atrous in SE Mauritania, with Tara Shine. In the late afternoon of an overcast day, in a rocky area just north of the town (16.665°N, 9.625°W), they saw a Greyish Eagle Owl perched among the rocks. JB did not write down details of the sighting, made using 10 x 40 binoculars, but was familiar with the species from Niger, where he had heard it, seen it several times, and found two dead ones on the road. Serle *et al.* (1977), the field guide available at the time, described and illustrated Spotted Eagle Owl *B. africanus*, as well as Verraux’s Eagle Owl *B. lacteus* and Desert Eagle Owl *B. (bubo) ascalaphus*. Spotted Eagle Owl *sensu stricto* does not occur in West Africa. Verreaux’s Eagle Owl is much bigger and has a very clearly marked face, while Desert Eagle Owl is much tawnier than Greyish Eagle Owl and has yellow, not dark, eyes.

Single individuals of Greyish Eagle Owl were subsequently recorded during an expedition of the Swiss Ornithological Institute by VS and DP in a rocky area at Tidjikdja (18.43°N, 11.57°W) on 8 Sep 2001, and at El Gawyia (18.48°N, 11.38°W) on 10 Sep 2001. These two localities lie some 280 km to the northwest of Ayoun el Atrous. The birds were perched in broad daylight and observed with binoculars at 50–100 m distance. The dark eyes were seen but no notes were taken, as the significance of the observations was not realised until much later.

Knowledge of the distribution of eagle owls and of many other bird species in the Sahel is still limited. SE Mauritania is in fact almost a blank spot on the ornithological map, especially for land birds (P. Browne *in litt.*). Fry *et al.* (1988), Hoyo *et al.* (1999), König *et al.* (1999) and Borrow & Demey (2004), show Greyish Eagle Owl as occurring at similar and slightly more northerly latitudes in NW Senegal, as well as around Timbuktu and further east in Mali. In Niger the species has been observed in the Air at more than 18°N (<www.nibdab.org> consulted 16 Sep 2012). The rocky habitat where the birds were observed in Mauritania is also typical for the species.

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Rediscovery of Western Wattled Cuckoo-shrike *Lobotos lobatus* in Ghana and some other significant observations

The Bia Conservation Area (BCA), lying between 6°20' and 6°38'N, and 2°58' to 3°58'W, represents the best example of the transition rainforest between the moist evergreen and the semi-deciduous vegetation zones in Ghana. Although the Bia Resource Reserve (BRR: the 300 km² southern section of BCA) has been heavily logged over the last twenty years, the 77 km² Bia National Park (BNP: the northern part) is pristine rainforest, the finest example of its type remaining in Ghana today and home to reputedly the tallest trees in Ghana, including the finest specimens of economic timber species such as African Mahogany *Khaya anthotheca* and Sipo