

Thanks to Peter Browne of the Mauritanian Bird Atlas project for encouraging us to write this note, and to him and Tim Wacher for much appreciated comments on our manuscript.

References

- BORROW, N. & DEMEY, R. (2004) *Field Guide to the Birds of Western Africa*. Christopher Helm, London.
- FRY, C.H., KEITH, S. & URBAN, E.K. (1988) *The Birds of Africa*, vol. 3. Academic Press, London.
- HOYO, J. DEL, ELLIOTT, A. & SARGATAL, J. (eds) (1999) *Handbook of the Birds of the World*, vol. 5. Lynx, Barcelona.
- ISENMANN, P., BENMERGUI, M., BROWNE, P., BA, A.D., DIAGANA, C.H., DIAWARA, Y & OULD SIDATY, Z. EL A. (2010) *Oiseaux de Mauritanie — Birds of Mauritania*. Société d'Études Ornithologiques de France, Paris.
- KÖNIG, C., WEICK, F. & BECKING, J.-H. (1999) *Owls. A Guide to the Owls of the World*. Pica Press, Robertsbridge.
- LAMARCHE, B. (1988) Liste Commentée des Oiseaux de Mauritanie. *Etud. sahar. ouest-afr.* 1(4 et Spécial): 1–164.
- SERLE, W., MOREL, G.J. & HARTWIG W. (1977) *A Field Guide to the Birds of West Africa*. Collins, London.

Received 17 July 2012

Revised 27 May 2013

Joost BROUWER¹, Volker SALEWSKI² & Dieter PETER³

¹Brouwer Envir. & Agric. Consultancy,

Wildekamp 32, 6721 JD Bennekom, The Netherlands. <brouwereac@online.nl>

²Univ. of Osnabrück, Behavioural Biology, Barbarastr. 11, 49076 Osnabrück, Germany

³Schweizerische Vogelwarte, 6204 Sempach, Switzerland

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

Entandrophragma utile (PADP 2001). Although many animal species have been depleted by poaching, the Bia Conservation Area retains faunal levels of international importance, such as a high density of elephants, c. 650 butterfly species (Larsen 2001), and “perhaps one of the richest forest bird faunas in Ghana” (Dyer & Amponsah 1997). BNP was designated a Man and Biosphere Reserve in 1983, still the only one in Ghana (PADP 2001). It is also an Important Bird Area (Fishpool & Evans 2001).

From January 1999 to July 2001 I worked as a Conservation Officer and Wildlife Ranger in BCA, during which period I made the following observations and oversaw the development of the trail and road network seen in Fig. 1, which also shows the locations of the bird sightings mentioned below.

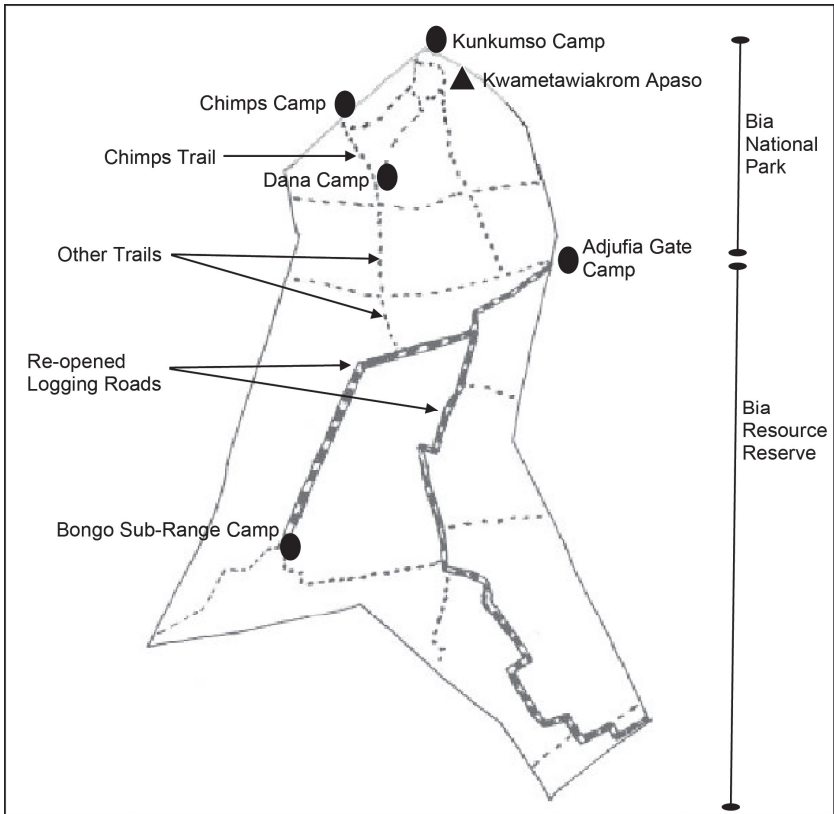


Figure 1. Bia Conservation Area, showing locations of bird sightings. (Adapted from PADP 2001.)

***Lobotos lobatus* Western Wattled Cuckoo-shrike.** On 13 Apr 2001, four labourers, a Wildlife Division supervisor and I were expanding the trail network in BCA, into previously almost impenetrable forest. A number of rock outcrops in the area, known locally as *apaso*, rise to almost canopy level in some areas and provide viewpoints over clearings or less dense forest where the rocky ground inhibits plant growth. I was surveying a new trail which would eventually link the Adwuafua Gate Camp with Kumkumso Camp. As we neared Kwametawiakrom Apaso Pool, we diverted up a steep rocky slope to investigate part of Kwametawiakrom Apaso. At this point at *c.* 6 m range a cuckoo-shrike flew out from the rocky slope, slightly below than me, showing its upperparts. It resembled a Black-winged Oriole *Oriolus nigripennis*, with dark head, olive green upperwings and black primaries; however its yellow wattle (not orange as depicted in Perlo 2002) was clearly visible, which, with its almost luminous orange rump, left no doubt over the identification as a male Western Wattled Cuckoo-shrike *Lobotos lobatus*. I later confirmed the identification using Keith *et al.* (1992).

Grimes (1987) noted that Western Wattled Cuckoo-shrike was a rare resident of the forest region previously known from 3 skins collected in Ghana, with 18 specimens taken between 1967 and 1971 in Liberia. Records have continued to be scarce across its range, with it being regularly reported in less than a dozen sites in Guinea, Sierra Leone and Ivory Coast (Lachenaud 2004). It is locally rare to uncommon in Liberia (Gatter 1997), and listed as Vulnerable to extinction (<www.birdlife.org/datazone/speciesfactsheet.php?id=5966> consulted 10 Aug 2012).

Unfortunately, the Western Wattled Cuckoo-shrike, despite being first described from a Ghanaian specimen, is rare in Ghana. Since the last of the skins reported by Grimes (1987) was taken, in 1937, there have been just four plausible but not fully documented reports of it in Ghana: an imprecise report during the 1980s (Gartshore *et al.* 1995); at Krokosua Hills Forest Reserve near to BNP, in 1999 (<www.rsgs.org/expeditions/reports/africa.htm#1999/3>, consulted Aug 2012); at Kakum NP in 2010 (<www.birdlife.org/datazone/speciesfactsheet.php?id=5966>, consulted 10 Aug 2012); near Bonkro (north of Kakum) in Apr 2011, by J. Ntakor (R.J. Dowsett pers. comm.). There is an urgent need to find out more about the species and its habitat requirements to ensure its conservation, especially as the population is probably declining with high rates of forest clearance. Remaining populations and likely sites in Ghana therefore need to be surveyed, numbers estimated and threats evaluated.

Other significant observations

***Ixobrychus sturmii* Dwarf Bittern.** One took flight after feeding in a pool impounded by an old logging road, 29 Nov 2000. Not previously recorded from the BCA.

***Tringa ochropus* Green Sandpiper.** One flushed from the pool beside Bongo Sub-range camp in the southwest of BRR, 14 Feb 2001, is the first record for BCA.

***Psittacus erithacus* Grey Parrot.** One bird sighted on the edge of BNP at Kumkumso, 14 Jan 2000; one sighted by Chimps Trail, 22 May 2000. Not recorded in recent surveys of Bia by Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett (2011).

***Alcedo leucogaster* White-bellied Kingfisher.** One observed close to the Guest House at Kunkumso on the edge of BNP, 13 May 2000; one on Chimps Trail, 22 May 2000. Grimes (1987) noted this species as uncommon within forests and plantations including at BNP.

***Merops muelleri* Blue-headed Bee-eater.** N. Boahmah and I, with M. Fontein and F. Hurst (two experienced birdwatchers), discovered two birds, which we watched for 20–30 min, hawking for insects over a pool by the road just south of the Adjufia Gate Camp in BRR, 2 Sep 2000. Only two recent records (Grimes 1987).

***Ceratogymna subcylindricus* Black-and-white-casqued Hornbill and *C. atrata* Black-casqued Hornbill.** One individual of each species was seen in BRR, flying over the re-opened logging roads that run from Adjufia Gate Camp to the southwest and southeast of the reserve, on 19 Oct 2000 and 8 Mar 1999, respectively. According to Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett (2011) “all large frugivorous hornbills seem to have completely disappeared in the 1990s” from Bia, with the last documented sighting of *B. subcylindricus* in 1976–7 and of *B. atrata* in 1991.

***Sasia africana* African Piculet.** Observed on Chimps Trail between Chimps Camp and Dana Camp, 10 Jun 2000.

I worked in Ghana as part of the Protected Areas Development Programme (PADP) through Voluntary Services Overseas (VSO). I would like to thank VSO, the PADP and the Wildlife Division of the Ghana Forestry Department for making my placement in BNP possible, especially Paul Symonds, John Naada Majam and Moses Kofi Sam who were good friends as well as my managers. I would also like to thank my birding companions, especially Nicolas Boahmah, Maurits Fontein, Francis Hurst and David Daramani with whom I saw my best birds, as well as various visitors whom I guided in the forest. Lastly *medasi*, thank you to all my Bia Wildlife Division colleagues and the village of Kumkumso/New Debiso who looked after me and adopted me into their community.

References

- DYER, M. & AMPONSAN, J. (1997) *Bia Conservation Area Management Plan Annex 4: Ornithological Perspectives: Biodiversity Conservation & Management, Tourism Development and Field Staff Training*. Protected Areas Development Programme, Wildlife Division (Forestry Commission), Accra.
- DOWSETT-LEMAIRE, F. & DOWSETT, R.J. (2011) *Ornithological Surveys in Bia National Park and Resource Reserve, Ghana (January 2005, December 2009 and September 2010)*. Misc. Rep. 73, Wildlife Division (Forestry Commission), Accra.
- FISHPOOL, L.D.C. & EVANS, M.I. (eds) (2001) *Important Bird Areas in Africa and Associated Islands: priority sites for conservation*. Pisces, Newbury.
- GARTSHORE, M.E., TAYLOR, P.D. & FRANCIS, I.S. (1995) *Forest Birds in Côte d'Ivoire*. Study Rep. 58, Birdlife International, Cambridge.
- GATTER, W. (1997) *Birds of Liberia*. Pica Press, Robertsbridge.

- GRIMES, L.G. (1987) *The Birds of Ghana*. Checklist 9, British Ornithologists' Union, London.
- KEITH, S., URBAN, E.K. & FRY, C.H. (eds) (1992) *The Birds of Africa*, vol. 4. Academic Press, London.
- LACHENAUD, O. (2004) Notes sur l'Echenilleur caronculé *Lobotos lobatus*. *Malimbus* 26: 19–23.
- LARSEN, T.B. (2001) *Bia Conservation Area Management Plan Annex 2: The Butterflies of Ankasa/Nini-Suhien and Bia Protected Area Systems in Western Ghana (with notes on those of the Krokosua Hills)*. Protected Areas Development Programme, Wildlife Division (Forestry Commission), Accra.
- PADP (2001) *Bia Conservation Area Management Plan*. Protected Areas Development Programme, Wildlife Division (Forestry Commission), Accra.
- PERLO, B. VAN (2002) *Collins Illustrated Checklist: Birds of Western & Central Africa*. Harper Collins, London.

Received 13 July 2011

Revised 24 June 2013

James S. PENDER
Development & Natural Resources Advisor, 115 Gibraltar Crescent, West Ewell,
Epsom, Surrey, U.K. <penderjs@gmail.com>