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THE BIRDS OF ZARIA. IV - RESIDENTS, VAGRANTS, AND CHECK-LIST(PASSERINES)

C. H. Fry

(Continued from p. 79)

IV. Residents, Vagrants and Check-list (Passerines).

Buckley's Bush-Lark *Mirafra buckleyi* Resident; breeding about December to February; the commonest lark, although confusion in the field with *H. modesta* has obscured the abundance of each of these two species relative to the other local larks. Buckley's Lark is common to frequent in a wide variety of situations - farm- and cleared land, in suburbia, lightly wooded and even well-wooded country, and on old cultivated land reverting to bush.

Rufous-naped Bush-Lark *Mirafra africana* Recorded in nearly all months; presumably breeds. Far more commonly observed in the first 3 or 4 months of the year, but this is probably only because the ground is far more open then; for this lark, in sharp contrast to Buckley's, is wary and skulking and tends to 'freeze' on approach, under a tuft of grass. Thus good views can be had, but the bird is generally found only when it is flushed from a few feet ahead, when it invariably flies low and drops quickly only 30 or 50 yards further on. It is in fact not at all infrequent, inhabiting almost exclusively areas with a good herb layer and protective covering of shrubs. A typical habitat is land covered with a fairly dense layer of 2ft. to 5ft. shrubs, heavily grazed by cattle. Again, this bush-lark may be flushed from a crop of tall cereals if a herb-layer has grown underneath.

On the Jos Plateau it inhabits yet more open country in my experience, meadows and the like, and is more approachable.

I have never knowingly heard any voice from this species, either song or call, but a puzzling song heard in early July from a lark singing at 200 ft may have been *M. africana*.

Rufous-rumped Bush-Lark *Pinarocorys erythropygia*

Crested Lark *Galerida cristata* See p.16. Common and widely distributed outside woodland. Evidently breeds throughout the dry season; a fledgling was seen in January and a nestling on 1st May. Apparently a partial migrant, being less common during summer months, but present throughout the year.

Nigerian Sun-Lark *Helicocorys modesta* Status uncertain. Recorded by Serle (1943) as occurring sparingly in rocky outcrops and grassy hillsides about Zaria. Serle found a nest at Zaria on 2nd March. I have heard singing in November (only) but I have few positive sight records. Probably locally common, largely restricted to inselbergs or rock-strewn open country.

Chestnut-backed Finch-Lark *Eremopterix leucotis* A locally common to very common dry season breeding visitor, from the fourth week of October (earliest: 21st) until the third week of April (latest: 22nd). Inhabits barren, sandy or stony land, over-grazed scrubby bush, the sandy environs of streams and erosion-areas, where flocks of up to 20 may be seen in Autumn. Breeds in December and January, fledglings accompanied by their parents having been seen on 20th February and 2nd March. Omitted from Pt. I (African Migrants).

White Wagtail *Motacilla alba*Yellow Wagtail *Budytes flavus*

Plain-backed Pipit *Anthus leucophrys* Fairly common and widespread in grassy places, meadows, gardens. Breeding resident. Serle (1943) found a nest on 3 on 20th March at Zaria.

Tree Pipit *Anthus trivialis*Red-throated Pipit *Anthus cervinus*

Yellow-throated Long-claw *Macronyx croceus* Fairly common and widespread breeding resident.

Sudan Brown Babbler Turdoides plebeja. A bird of savannah woodland, long established gardens, thickets and kurmis, avoiding very open country. Flocks are frequently seen in such habitats. Resident, but no breeding data for Zaria.

Blackcap Babbler Turdoides reinwardii Scarce resident. Occurs locally in dense woods and thickets, as in Zaria Forest Reserve and the Dunbi woods 10 miles South of Zaria. Once netted in a grove of old Mango trees in a deserted hamlet - a surprising situation. Not recorded North of Zaria.

Oriole Babbler Hypergerus atriceps Scarce resident, recorded only from Dunbi wood and Anara Forest Reserve, Kaduna (also at Birnin Gwari, 60 miles due West of Zaria, carrying nest material on 13th April). Restricted to dark tangles of vegetation near or over water.

Common Bulbul Pycnonotus barbatus. Very common and widespread in all habitats. Breeds in the wet season.

Leaf-love Pyrhurus scandens Sight records of 3-4 in a kurmi in Anara Forest Reserve on February and May; no other records.

Yellow-throated Leaf-love Pyrhurus flavicollis Scarce and local. Rather common however in Zaria Forest Reserve, in shaded thickets through which a stream flows. Fledglings in a family party here on 19th August. Not recorded North of Zaria.

Spotted Flycatcher Muscicapa striata

Pied Flycatcher Ficedula hypoleuca

Swamp Flycatcher Alcedonax aquaticus. Very uncommon resident, requiring shaded permanent water.

Grey Tit-Babbler Parisoma plumbeum. This bird has recently been found in Dunbi woods, 10 miles south of Zaria, where it is apparently not uncommon (in October). No other local record.

Pale Flycatcher Bradornis pallidus Frequent, widespread resident; generally keeps to shrubs lower than 12ft. Resident, breeds about April/May.

Black Flycatcher Melaenornis edolioides. Uncommon breeding resident. A nest on 16th May contained 3 half-grown young; it was at 10ft. in an exposed hole where a branch had broken away, in the trunk of a 25ft. leafless tree; there was a coarse lining of twigs with inner fine petioles etc. Another nest on 31st May held 2 young about 10 days old, but this nest was of a very different type - a finely-built cup on a fork near the extremity of a branch of a leafy tree in a garden. The inference of Praed & Grant (1963, African Handbook of Birds, Series 2 Vol. 2) is that the genus either builds its own nest or expropriates other birds' nests; in which case the 16th May nest may have been its own, and the second nest an expropriated one. A well-grown immature bird was seen on 9th August. Nestlings and fledglings are very turdine.

Yellow-bellied Flycatcher Hyliota flavigaster Very scarce; only in mature savannah woodland.

Senegal Puffback Flycatcher Batis senegalensis Common and widespread breeding resident.

Scarlet-spectacled Flycatcher Platysteira cynea Rare, probably resident. This species, which can scarcely be overlooked because of its voice, has been found only in kurmis in Anara Forest Reserve (and at Birnin Gwari).

Blue Fairy Flycatcher Erannornis longicauda Rare. Occurs in Anara F. R. kurmis, and has been reported from Zaria gardens, but confirmation is required of the latter.

Paradise Flycatcher Tchitrea viridis

Kurrichane Thrush Turdus libonyanus Breeding resident, probably partially migratory. Common and widespread in the wet season from March to October, but much more local in the dry season, when restricted to mature shade gardens.

Rock Thrush Monticola saxatilis

Wheatear Oenanthe oenanthe

Red-breasted Chat Oenanthe heuglini

Red-tailed Chat Cercomela familiaris A bird of erosion 'badlands', sandy stream banks, and the lower slopes of inselbergs, in which habitats it is frequent. Resident, breeding in the dry season until May.

White-fronted Black Chat Pentholaea albifrons Breeding resident, frequent in dry scrub country with scattered trees, in farmland and poor woodland. Breeds from January to late April.

White-crowned Cliff-Chat Thamnodaea coronata Locally common breeding resident; confined to inselbergs, and present on all outcrops above about 200ft. high.

Ant-Chat Myrmecocichla aethiops No records since 1961 when Ward recorded it as uncommon in the vicinity of Samaru. Probably very local.

Whinchat Saxicola rubetra

Snowy-crowned Robin-Chat Cossypha niveicapilla*

Rufous Scrub-Robin Erythropysia galactotes Uncommon, in sandy wastes and erosion areas only. All records fall between the last week of October and mid-April, and it may be migrant. A nest of 3 was found on 13th February.

Redstart Phoenicurus phoenicurus

Nightingale Luscinia megarhynchos Palaearctic migrant. Only 2 or 3 good sight records, but probably a regular and frequent visitor or passage migrant.

Whitethroat Sylvia communis

Garden Warbler Sylvia borin

Blackcap Sylvia atricapilla

Subalpine Warbler Sylvia cantillans

Icterine Warbler Hippolais icterina

Melodious Warbler Hippolais polyglotta

Olivaceous Warbler Hippolais pallida

European Reed Warbler Acrocephalus scirpaceus

Sedge Warbler Acrocephalus schoenobaenus

*The White-crowned Robin-Chat C. albicapilla and the White-browed Robin-Chat C. polioptera have been netted at Birnin Gwari, 60 miles due west of Zaria; neither has yet been recorded in the Zaria area however.

Willow Warbler Phylloscopus trochilus

Wood Warbler Phylloscopus sibilatrix

(Rufous Cane Warbler Calamocetes rufescens Almost certainly this species which occurs sparingly in tangles of *Minosa* and grasses at the edge of Maska Dam. Has not yet been netted for confirmation, but good views obtained.)

Grey-capped Bush-Warbler Apalis caniceps A small population in the mature Dumbi woods.

Nuthatch-Warbler Sylvietta brachyura Frequent widespread breeding resident in all types of woodland including gardens and Kurmis, and even foraging in scrubland with a mean shrub level of about 4 ft.

Green-backed Eremomela Eremomela pusilla Common and widely distributed but easily overlooked, being essentially a bird of the canopy. Resident.

Grey-backed Camaroptera Camaroptera brevicaudata Very common, occurring almost wherever there is deep leafy shade, even if isolated in otherwise open country.

Gold Cost Fantail Warbler Cisticola juncoideis

Nigerian Cloudscraper Cisticola eximia) Both occur, but status uncertain. What was formerly assumed to be eximia is a common resident of marshes, water meadows, flood-plains and the edges of fadamas, and also in the wet season, of well-drained meadows with rank grass of or 3 ft high; during the rains the song of undoubted eximia males is heard regularly above all these habitats. But juncoideis also occur, at least in the flood-plains of the R. Galma through Zaria in the rains, when its very characteristic "zit.....zit.....zit..." song is heard at the same place and time as eximia's song it is very interesting that these two closely allied species should breed and feed apparently cheek-by-jowl in the same marshes. An eximia was feeding nestlings on 15th September.

Rock-loving Grass-Warbler Cisticola ornini A common breeding resident of larger inselbergs only.

Singing Bush-Warbler Cisticola cantans Common, probably the most widely-spread of the cisticolas; in light woodland and denser woods with a good grass layer, in scrubby erosion country, on the edges of kurmis, and in fadamas where small shrubs are scattered through-out the grass and sedge beds. Breeding resident.

Red-faced Grass-Warbler Cisticola erythrops Evidently rare, with only one positive record of a bird netted in May in Zaria Forest Reserve Kurmi. Probably commoner however.

Rufous Grass-Warbler Cisticola galactotes Common in dense reed-beds by standing open water, overgrown ditches, grassy fadamas etc. Breeding resident. A fledgling being fed by an adult near Zaria on 16th December.

Striped Grass-Warbler Cisticola natalensis Rather uncommon, and habitat not as well defined as in most others of the genus. Rank 6ft grass with interspersed shrubs near water or moist ground, is preferred. Resident. Nest building on 26th September.

Shortwing Grass-Warbler Cisticola brachyptera A fairly common and widespread breeding resident of farmland, degraded bush or well-formed woodland, and also scrubby fallow-land with a dense covering of low (3 ft.) bushes.

Redpate Grass-Warbler Cisticola ruficeps Rather similar to the preceding species; I am uncertain what habitat distinction between the two there might be. C. ruficeps would appear to be the commoner of the two; it very generally sings from tall tree tops, does not occur out of woods, but does not seem to frequent a "hard thorny type of vegetation" (cf. Bannerman, 1953).

Red-winged Warbler Heliolais erythroptera Frequent breeding resident, Generally in noisy parties of half-a-dozen, in the same sort of ill-defined habitat as Cisticola cantans (q.v.).

Moustached Scrub-Warbler Melocichla mentalis Frequent and widespread in grassy or bushy tangles of vegetation; generally near water. Resident; breeds in the wet season.

West African Prinia Prinia subflava Frequent and widespread breeding resident. Inhabits variously degraded woodland, also scattered shrubs in grassland or fadamas etc.

European swallow Hirundo rustica

Ethiopian Swallow Hirundo aethiopica. Very common and widespread breeding resident.

Pied-winged Swallow Hirundo leucosoma

Wire-tailed swallow Hirundo smithii Very uncommon. A pair have bred every year beneath a road bridge over standing water 25 miles NW of Zaria, nest-building beginning in October and the young fledging about February. Two or three birds have occasionally been noted at other road bridges and at Maska Dam.

Red-rumped Swallow Hirundo rufula See p. 16. Very scarce in June and July, but a considerable immigration in the first half of August. Thereafter common until May, breeding December to February. Nest building commences in the 1st week October and eggs hatch about the 1st week January.

Rufous-chested Swallow Hirundo semirufa

Lesser Striped Swallow Hirundo abyssinica

Grey-rumped Swallow Pseudhirundo griseopyga Rare, either vagant or an uncommon migrant. One at Zaria on 8th August (and one possible at Giwa, 15 miles N.W. of Zaria, on 21st June.)

Preuss's Cliff-Swallow Leucythoplates preussi Irregular visitor, probably non-breeding, seen in groups varying from half-a-dozen to 700, in all months from October to June inclusive. For distinctions between this species and the House Martin Delichon urbica See p. 43-44.

European Sand-Martin Riparia riparia

Banded Martin Riparia cinota

Sudan Sand-Martin Riparia paludicola Uncommon or local breeding resident or migrant. Recorded in all months except June and July. I have seen it only as solitary pairs on the R. Galma or on sandy streams with wooded banks, but Serle (1943) records a colony of about 20 nests on the R. Galma near Zaria in December. The four young in a solitary nest kept under observation in December and January, fledged between 5th and 10th February.

Red-throated Rock-Martin Ptyonoprogne rufigula A common breeding resident of inselbergs. Kufena Rock, Zaria, has a population of about 20. All birds occasionally wander half-a-mile or more over woodland adjacent to their inselbergs.

House-Martin Delichon urbica

Fanti Rough-winged Swallow Psalidoprogne obscura

Red-shouldered Cuckoo-Shrike Campephaga phoenicea See p. 17. Fairly common wherever there are tall trees (40 - 60 ft). Both birds of a pair were carrying food on 17th. September, but the nest could not be found.

White-breasted Cuckoo-Shrike Coracina pectoralis A scarce resident, presumably breeding, occurring in mature Guinea woodland, in tall trees on the banks of streams, and sometimes in degraded woods.

Glossy-backed Drongo Diorurus adsimilis Frequent and widespread breeding resident.

Sharpe's Square-tailed Drongo Diorurus sharpei Known only in this area from a kurmi in Anara Forest Reserves where frequent.

Long-crested Helmet-Shrike Prionops plumata Frequent to common and widespread breeding resident. A conspicuous bird of gardens. A nest with 4 half-grown nestlings was found on 15th March. 3 nestlings were given to me on 19th October.

Red-tailed Shrike Lanius isabellinus

Woodchat Lanius senator

Long-tailed Shrike Corvinella corvina Common and widespread; especially in or near cultivated areas. 4 nestlings were purchased on 9th June and reared.

Barbary Shrike Laniarius barbarus Common and widespread, but restricted to deep shade from which they often emerge in cool weather.

Bell-Shrike Laniarius ferrugineus Recorded only in Anara For. Res. Kurmi.

Gambian Puff-back Shrike Dryocopus gambensis Frequent. A bird of the canopy or leafy shade in smaller trees and shrubs. In gardens, kurnis, open woodland, thickets etc.

Brubru Shrike Nilaus afer Uncommon resident, doubtless breeds. No obvious habitat preferences, except that it is seldom seen outside leafy trees. I have seen Brubru Shrikes feeding on insects? - on the ground.

Black-crowned Tchagra Tchagra senegal Frequent to common and widespread. Breeding resident. Fledglings noted on 23rd April.

(Little Blackcap Tchagra Antichromis minutus Reported at Zaria by E. Butler, but confirmation required. Not recorded by Ward or by any naturalist at present resident in Zaria. Serle (1939) recorded the species in the south of Zaria Province near Kafanchan).

Orange-breasted Bush-Shrike Chlorophoneus sulfureopectus Widely but rather thinly distributed, preferring overgrown thickets, Kurnis and other shaded places. Resident, although a curious lack of records in December, January February (does not sing at that time?); probably breeds.

Gladiator Bush-Shrike Malaconotus poliocephalus Occurs not very commonly in all types of woodland including gardens, but leafy trees of not less than about 25 ft are essential. Skulks, and very easily overlooked unless calling.

African Golden Oriole Oriolus auratus

White-shouldered Black Tit Melaniparus niger Frequent and widespread in mature and degraded woodland, gardens, etc. Breeding resident.

West African Penduline Tit Anthoscopus parvulus A diminutive little bird in small parties of 3 or 4, easily overlooked. Resident, likely to be found wherever trees or shrubs of about 6 ft. occur, particularly in light woodland. (Sanaru, A.B.U., degraded savannah woodland, Zaria Forest Reserve Dunbi etc.).

Pied Crow Corvus albus Very common and widespread breeding resident.

Black Magpie Ptilostonus afer Common in open country - parkland, fields, farms and large gardens, but flocks are somewhat given to local wandering apparently and may be absent for weeks at a time from normally-frequented places. Resident; nests with young found in May and June.

Amethyst Starling Cinnyricinclus leucogaster See p. 17 A wet season visitor from February until about the end of August. Last seen in 1965 on 20th August, on which date they were however common and flocking. In view of uncertainty about the breeding of this species in West Africa it is important to ascertain whether or not it breeds in this area; one was seen carrying nest material on 12th May, but the observation was not followed up.

Short-tailed Glossy Starling Lamprocolius chalcurus Status uncertain. Collected by Ward & Elgood in Zaria Forest Reserve (date?) and two ^{collected} at A.B.U. out of a flock of 20 which were feeding on the fruits of Ficus (lecardii) in a garden through most of October. See below.

Swainson's Glossy Starling Lamprocolius chloropterus)

Purple Glossy Starling Lamprocolius purpureus) Resident and doubtless breed. These two starlings occur in much the same habitat (perhaps chloropterus prefers more closed woodland, and purpureus open woodland or parkland) and often flock together. They roost together and there is a large roost in Zaria Forest Reserve. Both are common, but purpureus is more conspicuous because of its large size, easy identity, and occurrence in residential areas. In point of actual numbers however chloropterus is more abundant and flocks of hundreds occur from June to December. In the first half of the year this starling is less sociable and presumably breeds then. The same applies to purpureus, except that (non-roosting) flocks seldom exceed 20.

L. chloropterus and purpureus are easily distinguished in the field; the former is small, green with a green head, (and steel blue reflections on wings, neck and belly, but without purple) and is often in flocks of 20-100; L. purpureus is very much larger, with green wings and back, and purple head, underside, wings and tail; the blood-red or orange eye is far more conspicuous than the paler smaller eye of chloropterus; purpureus is generally in small flocks of 5-10.

The Blue-eared Glossy Starling L. chalybaeus is a thorn savannah species which is not thought to occur as far south as Zaria, it is virtually indistinguishable from chloropterus in the field.

L. chalcurus is intermediate in most characters between chloropterus and purpureus. In the field it is markedly larger and bluer than chloropterus which it otherwise resembles very closely except the tail is blue (green in chloropterus). It is readily distinguishable from purpureus.

Long-tailed Glossy Starling Lamprotonis caudatus Locally common breeding resident. A common bird in the Institute of Agricultural Research residential area (Samaru) but rare at the A.B.U. campus 2 miles away; frequent in old gardens in Zaria; always present - a flock of about 12-in a very circumscribed area by Maska Dam. Not infrequent in farm and parkland as at Shika, or in the Zaria Forest Reserve plantations, but otherwise decidedly uncommon. A juvenile out of the nest was being fed by its parent on 14th November.

Chestnut-winged Starling Onychognathus fulgidus Common breeding residents restricted to larger inselbergs.

Chestnut-bellied Starling Spree pulcher Vagrant 4 on 24th January 1965, last seen on 13th May (Walker (1965) N.O.S. 5 : 22)

Yellow-billed Oxpecker Buphagus africanus Resident. Common in close association with cattle. No evidence as to its breeding in the Zaria area. Indeed it seems to be especially prone to flocking (suggesting non-breeding) in June, when the species breeds around Kano.

Yellow White-eye Zosterops senegalensis resident, probably breeds. Frequent to common in gardens and moist woodland; elsewhere uncommon.

Beautiful Long-tailed Sunbird Nectarinia pulchella Partial migrant? A common and widespread bird from the third week of February until the end of May, apparently less common in June, December and January, and not recorded from July to November inclusive except for once in September. Inconspicuous and perhaps overlooked in non-breeding plumage in late summer. Breeds in the wet season.

Pygmy Long-tailed Sunbird Hedydipna platyura In the dry season the commonest sunbird, widely distributed. Breeds. Numbers fall off in May and I have no records between 16th May and 14th August. Males in full plumage suddenly appear about the third week of October, whether by immigration or moult I do not know. Much further data is required.

Copper Sunbird Cinnyris cupreus

Yellow-bellied Sunbird Cinnyris venustus See p. 17. Add: locally very common, in Dunbi Wood, Zaria (September 1965; still common on 29th). Correction: the male at Birni'n Gwari on 2nd April was one of a pair both carrying food to unseen young on 30th March.

Scarlet-breasted Sunbird Chalcomitra senegalensis Common and widely distributed breeding resident.

Olive-backed Sunbird Cyanomitra verticalis Very local; breeding wet-season visitor? Recorded only from Dunbi Wood, where two or three pairs were seen in September 1965 (D.Wells, C.H.F.) and including an immature male on 26th September.

Violet-backed Sunbird Anthreptes longuemarei An adult male and female Dunbi Wood, Zaria, 17th December 1965 (D.Wells, C.H.F.) and an adult male with an immature 20 miles NW of Zaria on 9th January 1966 (N. Skinner).

Nile Spotted Creeper Salpinctes sibilatrix Rare. One by Shika fadama on 15th June and 8th July 1959 (P. Ward).

Yellow-fronted Canary Serinus mozambicus Very uncommon. Probably a breeding resident. Only eight sightings in three years (C.H.F.), in lightly or well wooded country.

Streaky-headed Seed-eater Polioptila gularis Uncommon, but regularly seen in its favoured habitat - the environs of sandy streams with well-timbered banks, and open grazed glades between the scattered clumps of shrubs; also sometimes away from streams in dry woodland relatively free from human interference, as in the 'Samaru bush'. It seems to be closely associated with Anogeissus schimperi, on the fruits of which it feeds.

White-rumped Serin Polioptila leucopygia Inconspicuous, even its varied and pleasing canary song seeming to blend into the sense-dulling mid-day heat, but nevertheless a common bird, nearly always in close association with man in gardens and farms. One of a pair was on its nest on 14th December at 16 ft. in a baobab tree, a neat open cup near the end of a 2" thick branch.

Nigerian Little Bunting Emberiza forbesi Uncommon, probably a breeding resident. In relatively undisturbed light or medium woodland. Only seen in 3 or 4 localities, all near Samaru.

Cabanis's Bunting Emberiza cabanisi One pair recorded by Ward in a lateritic gully area at Samaru. Ward did not record E. forbesi in the Zaria area and there have been no subsequent records of E. cabanisi.

Ortolan Bunting Emberiza hortulana

Rock-Bunting Fringillaria tahapisi Common and widespread, by no means restricted to rocks, although clearly having a predilection for rather bare lateritic ground with a thin covering of shrubs. Resident. A nest c/2 found on 17th January had hatched by 27th.

Grey-headed sparrow Passer griseus Common resident; mainly suburban, but common also wherever there are trees of 15 ft. or more.

Bush sparrow Gymnoris dentata Abundant in all treed places Resident, breeds about January/February.

Sparrow-Weaver Plocepasser superciliosus A common bird in light woodland or erosin areas with a good covering of thorny shrubs. Resident, doubtless breeds. Generally seen in pairs.

Soaly-fronted Weaver Sporopipes frontalis. Very common breeding resident, preferring low thorny shrubs of about 6 ft.

Slender-billed Weaver Sitagra luteola Common and widespread breeding resident. Males acquire breeding plumage about February and moult into non-breeding plumage about the end of October. A rather solitary weaver of trees and thickets.

Heuglin's Masked Weaver Plesiositagra heuglini Status uncertain. Apparently a localised, rather uncommon weaver, breeding about June to August, generally but not necessarily near water. Ward gave it as common in the wet season. From very occasional dry-season records I presume that the species is resident in the area, but if so it is very generally overlooked outside the breeding season. Males in breeding plumage have been seen at the beginning of March.

Village Weaver Plesiositagra oucellatus Common breeding resident. A small colony at Samaru lake fledged towards the end of October; elsewhere nest-building was noted in December.

Spectacled Weaver Hyphanturgus brachypterus Scarce breeding resident, restricted to dense growth in Kurmis and forest reserves; generally near water since that is where densest thickets grow.

Red-winged Anaplectes Anaplectes melanotis Frequent; resident. Nest construction from early November to mid-April, and breeding until June. Anaplectes occurs in solitary pairs in moist woodland (i.e. generally near a stream), and nests are built at about 8 ft. at the edge of bushes in rain gulleys or on the underside of the canopy of taller trees; etc.

Black-faced Dioch Quelea quelea. In the dry season frequent, widely dispersed in small parties, usually near open water. Breeds in the rains when locally abundant but elsewhere absent. In June 1959 there were several thousand nests in Shika fadama (P.Ward).

Red-headed Dioch Quelea erythroptera Quite common in June 1959 in Shika fadama, breeding alongside Q. quelea (P.Ward). I have no subsequent records.

Fire-crowned Bishop Euplectes hordacea Fairly common in the wet season, but despite examination in the hand of numerous off-plumaged Euplectes netted in the dry season I have no definite records of it then, and suspect that it may be a wet season visitor only. Breeds.

The habitat is not obviously different from that of E. orix, but E. hordacea tends to inhabit areas with more high grass and less shrubs than orix and is more restricted to wet places.

Orange Bishop Euplectes orix Very common and widespread in all except the driest grassy areas in the rains; in the dry season it is somewhat restricted to fadamas and reedbeds by standing water, where it occurs in flocks. Breeding resident. Nests with young have been found from mid-August to 1st week October.

Napolean Bishop Euplectes afra Not uncommon in fadamas and extensive reedbeds. Breeds; probably resident.

Yellow-mantled Whydah *C. liuspasser macrourus* Common and widespread breeding resident.

Bronze Mannikin *Spermestes cucullatus* Common resident; nests with young have been seen from mid-August to the last week of November (i.e. well into the dry season).

Warbling Silverbill *Euodice cantans* Frequent; breeding resident in short-grass fadamas, low waterside bushes, on farmed field in the River Galma flood-plain, scattered thorn-shrubs in erosion gully areas, etc. Often Fan-Palms (*Borassus*) feature in its habitat. Nest-building has been observed in October and December. Occurs in pairs or small parties of about six, and easily overlooked.

(Black-bellied Seed-cracker *Pirenestes ostrinus* Recorded by Hartert (1915) as a breeding resident near Kaduna.)

Cut-throat Weaver *Amadina fasciata* Two pairs on 26th March 1965 (Skinner, Bull. N.O.S. 6: 53) last seen on 11th May, at Zaria.

Quail-Finch *Ortygospiza atricollis* Common resident, frequenting short grass or turf, or bare soil between tussocks, wherever these occur; Suburban however, and often associated with water. Easily overlooked unless the diminutive flight-call is known; on the ground the Quail-Finch conceals itself in a minimum of cover. Nests were found in October and November (Serle, 1943).

Red-winged Pytilia *Pytilia phoenicoptera* Rather uncommon resident, presumably breeds. In dry savannah thickets, and mature woodland.

Yellow-winged Pytilia *Pytilia hypogrammica* Once, a pair (male and female) in soft thicket amongst low shrubs by a stream four miles North of Zaria, October, 1965 (N.J. Skinner, A.R. Mathieson).

Black-bellied Fire-finch *Lagonosticta rara*

Bar-breasted Fire-finch *L. rufopiota*

Lavender Fire-finch *L. caerulescens*

Black-faced Fire-finch *L. nigricollis* About equal in abundance - frequent to common - and all resident presumed breeders. There is much overlap of habitat (and also with *L. senegala*) and *rara* and *nigricollis* occur widely in bushes, light woodland, scrub in erosion areas, waterside thickets and so on; *rara* seems to prefer more dense shade and moister situations. *L. caerulescens* inhabits mature woodland and dense thickets such as occur around the bases of inselbergs, and *rufopiota* frequents sandy paths or patches by water. Both the last named also occur in the bushy degraded savannah and scrubland of *nigricollis*.

Senegal Fire-finch *Lagonosticta senegala* Abundant breeding resident in all habitats.

Black-rumped Waxbill *Estrilda troglodytes* Frequent, resident, doubtless breeding. In tall tangled grasses, often by water.

Zebra Waxbill *Estrilda subflava* Common in the dry season from the 1st week of October to about the middle of May, when restricted to fadamas, flood-plains and water meadows with a grass layer of about 3ft. (Maska Dam, Sanaru lake, R. Galma). There is no reason to believe that *E. subflava* breeds locally although substantiation is required. I have no records between mid-May and October.

Orange-Cheeked Waxbill *Estrilda melpoda* Frequent breeding resident. Habitat preferences ill-defined.

* Red-cheeked Cordon-Blou Urnaeginthus bengalus Abundant resident, very widely distributed. Nest records in all months from July to December inclusive.

Combassous Hypochera sp. The form(s) of combassous in the Zaria area has not been ascertained. The Combassou is a common and widespread breeding resident. On 28th February a nest of Lagonosticta senegala was examined, containing one L. senegala and one Hypochera of the same age and with remarkable similarity in the form of the head and bill, and gape guide-markings.

Pin-tailed Whydah Vidua macroura. Resident (partial migrant?) Doubtless breeds. Males acquire breeding plumage in May, and moult out about October/November. Common and conspicuous in the wet season; apparently less common although still widely distributed in the dry.

Paradise Whydah Steganura orientalis Frequent, locally common, in parkland, degraded savannah, and light woodland with tall trees; males in breeding plumage about March to December. Rather uncommonly recorded in other months, when easily overlooked.

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(*White-cheeked Olive Weaver Nesocharis capistrata. Two in a thick Kurmi at Birnin Gwari, outside the Zaria-area, but only 60 miles away due west, on 13th April 1963.)

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NOTES ON BIRDS SEEN IN GHANA IN 1964

R.W.W. Sutton

(Continued from p. 62).

III : BIRDS NOTED ON A 1,500 MILE TOUR OF GHANA

My first stop was at Walewale (10° 25' N, 0° 55' W.), 70 miles north of Tamale. This is a well-wooded area, with some open places and cultivated fields. I was there on 17th-18th March and 21st-22nd March and made the following notes on the birds:

Swallow-tailed kite Chelictinia riocourii Up to six seen. One that was sitting on a tree was absurdly tame, and would not fly till a piece of earth I threw hit the branch on which it was sitting.

Grasshopper Buzzard Butastur rufipennis Very common and conspicuous, perching right out in the open. I saw this species everywhere in the North.

Lizard Buzzard Kaupifalco monogrammicus Frequent.

White-throated Francolin Francolinus albogularis Observed closely in the evening on a bare, cultivated field.

Nanaqua Dove Oena capensis Quite common, esp. in the more open areas.

Yellow-bellied Fruit Pigeon Vinago waalia Plentiful.

Yellow-billed Cuckoo Cuculus gularis Frequently heard.

Abyssinian Roller Coracias abyssinica One of the commonest birds in the North.

Hoopoe Upupa sp. Seen in dense woodland

Lesser Wood-hoopoe Scoptelus aterrinus Two seen in well-wooded area, in addition to Guinea Wood-Hoopoes Phoeniculus erythrorhynchus.

Carmine Bee-eater Merops nubicus Odd individuals seen in wooded areas.

Fine-spotted Woodpecker Campothera punctuligera 1 flushed from the ground in woods.

Long-crested helmet shrike Prionops plumata Especially common here, though I frequently saw it elsewhere in the North.

Brubru shrike Nilaus after 1 pair seen.

African Golden Oriole Oriolus auratus Common wherever there were plenty trees.

Yellow White-eye Zosterops senegalensis 1 pair seen.

Yellow-Bellied Sunbird Cinnerys venustus
Scarlet-Breasted Sunbird Chalcornitra senegalensis } Very Common.