

First records for Benin of Yellow-whiskered Greenbul *Andropadus latirostris*, Western Bearded Greenbul *Criniger barbatus* and White-browed Forest Flycatcher *Fraseria cinerascens*

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L'auteur rapporte la découverte de trois espèces nouvelles pour le Bénin: le Bulbul à moustaches jaunes *Andropadus latirostris*, le Bulbul crinon *Criniger barbatus*, et le Gobemouche à sourcils blancs *Fraseria cinerascens*, capturés dans des filets japonais et photographiés en 2001, dans les forêts de Pobé et Lokoli au sud du Bénin.

The avifauna of Benin has been the subject of only scant study and is still relatively unknown. This is particularly true of the forest species. The forests of the south were previously investigated by Brunel², and more recently by Anciaux¹ and Waltert & Mühlenberg⁷. Financial support from the Netherlands Committee of IUCN and the Centre Béninois pour le Développement Durable has made possible a more extensive study of the occurrence of forest birds in the country.

Despite the absence of large areas of tropical forest, the more recent studies^{1,7} and my own work⁶ indicate that more forest birds than might be expected still occur in the scattered remnant patches of Guinea-Congolese forest. The three species presented here are further additions to the Benin list, which was considerably extended by these studies (P M Claffey pers comm).

The remnant patches vary from 2 ha to 100 ha for the small sacred forests, and from 150 ha to 4,500 ha for the larger forest reserves, such as at Niaouli and Lama. Pobé Forest (06°57'N 02°40'E) which was investigated by Brunel², is a semi-deciduous forest of 150 ha, 3 km west of the Nigerian border. This small remnant comprises a dry part but with a natural spring, from which a small stream flows, giving permanent humidity and growth. Surveys were undertaken here in 1997 and between 2000 and 2002.

On 23 March and 1 June 2001, single Yellow-whiskered Greenbuls *Andropadus latirostris* congener were mist-netted (Fig 6). Both had very clear yellow malar stripes. Head and upperparts were dark grey-olive and the tail dark brown. The breast was pale olive, and they had brown-olive flanks and lower breast, and a pale white belly. Wing lengths were 84 mm and 83 mm, and weights 28 g and 31g.

The species is common in both Togo and Nigeria^{3,5}.

Lokoli Forest (07°03'N 02°16'E) is a marshy forest, which was ornithologically little known until 2000. It covers 500 ha and is the only forest in southern Benin with relatively high densities of forest birds and mammals. Water from a natural spring near the village of Cana, 8 km from the forest, creates a marshy and inaccessible habitat, thus providing some protection for the remaining wildlife. Surveys were undertaken here in 2000–2002.

On 29 September 2001, a Western Bearded Greenbul *Criniger barbatus ansorgeanus* was mist-netted (Fig 7). This large greenbul had a grey-brown head and a white chin becoming pale yellow on the throat. The primaries and secondaries were olive-green, the tail olive-yellow and it had a conspicuous red eye. Wing length was 97 mm and weight 45 g. The species is reportedly rare in Togo³, but not uncommon in Nigeria⁵.

On 30 March, 13 April and 15 September 2001, single White-browed Forest Flycatchers *Fraseria cinerascens ruthae* were mist-netted (Figs 8–9). Those on the first two dates were immatures, which could be confused with immature alethes, of which Fire-crested Alethe *Alethe diademata* has been recorded in Ware Maro Forest Reserve (P M Claffey pers comm) whilst Brown-chested Alethe *A. poliocephala* has been recorded in Nigeria⁵ but not in Togo³. Both had dark brown upperparts, with brown spots on the head, mantle, and greater and median coverts. The breast and flanks were brown-white and belly grey-white. A very small white supraloral spot was visible. Wing lengths were 80 mm and 73 mm, and weights 20 g and 18.5 g. On 15 September 2001, an adult was mist-netted (Fig 9). This individual had dark brown

upperparts, and pale brown median and greater coverts and primaries. The chin, throat, belly and undertail-coverts were white and the breast barred dark brown. There was a clear white supraloral spot. Wing length was 75 mm and weight 19 g. Whilst the species is not uncommon Nigeria⁵, it is unknown from Togo.

These observations represent the first documented records of these species in Benin, while White-browed Forest Flycatcher is an addition to the Dahomey Gap list.

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The first Golden Nightjar *Caprimulgus eximius* in Cameroon

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Un Engoulevent doré *Caprimulgus eximius* a été observé et photographié dans le nord du Cameroun, le 25 mars 2003. Ceci constitue la première mention pour le pays.

Golden Nightjar *Caprimulgus eximius* is confined to the Sahelian belt, where it is variously described as being uncommon to rare¹, locally uncommon to fairly common³, uncommon and perhaps even rare⁴, common and widespread⁵, and not uncommon⁶. It rarely reaches south of 12°N and, like many remote-area nightjars, there is generally very little known about the species, it having rarely been seen and perhaps never tape-recorded², and only a few nests discovered.

On 25 March 2003, at 06.30 hrs, together with Michael Mills, Ron Hoff and Dollyann Meyers and while searching for Cricket Warbler *Spiloptila clamans* 4 km north of Mora, in northern Cameroon, a male Golden Nightjar was flushed. It quickly resettled close by and was observed for c20 minutes (Figs 10–11, p 122). The area was a beige

gravelly plain bisected by wadis, sparsely vegetated with short stunted *Acacia* and *Combretum* spp, and short, yellow grass. Before we flushed the bird, we had speculated that this constituted ideal habitat for the nightjar, and that a visit at dusk could be productive. When the bird was flushed from directly underfoot, it flew up from the gentle slope of a wadi and settled away from the wadi's centre, within the sparse shade of a leafless *Acacia*, where the bird melted into its background and was hardly visible to the naked eye from 5 m. Its yellow, patterned plumage blended so well with the ground and yellow grass as to render the bird almost invisible. This was the most perfectly camouflaged of any nightjar we have seen. It was flushed once more in an attempt to photograph the wing pattern. This time it settled closer to the wadi's centre,