

# Further records from the remnant forests of Benin: White-tailed Ant Thrush *Neocossyphus poensis* and Bioko Batis *Batis poensis*

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Nouvelles données sur l'avifaune forestière du Bénin: le Néocossyphus à queue blanche *Neocossyphus poensis* et le Pritit de Lawson *Batis poensis*. Les auteurs rapportent la première observation du Néocossyphus (Grive fourmilière) à queue blanche *Neocossyphus poensis* au Bénin, dans la Forêt classée de Pobé, le 10 avril 2003, et confirment la présence du Pritit de Lawson (Batis de Fernando Po) *Batis poensis*, déjà signalé par Brunel en 1958.

The remnant forests of southern Benin have been the subject of a number of investigations in recent years<sup>1,10</sup>. Little or no field work had been performed in these areas since Bouet's<sup>2</sup> early notes and Brunel's observations, published in 1958<sup>3</sup>. Both Mackworth-Praed & Grant<sup>8</sup> and *Birds of Africa*<sup>7,9</sup> had extrapolated the presence of several species on the basis of evidence in contiguous areas, but without specific records. One of the significant contributions of the recent work has been to confirm over 30 of these species. It has also provided interesting evidence of the number of species that survive in relatively small areas of suitable forest habitat. Here we report the occurrence of White-tailed Ant Thrush *Neocossyphus poensis* and confirm the presence of Bioko Batis *Batis poensis*.

White-tailed Ant Thrush was observed in Pobé Forest Reserve (06°58'N 02°41'E) on 10 April 2003. The bird was perched in the upperstorey of the undergrowth at the forest edge, wagging its tail like a wagtail *Motacilla* sp. Head, throat, breast, upperparts and tail seemed almost black in the early-morning sun. Belly and undertail-coverts dark red. The broad white tips to the outer tail feathers were visible as the bird moved in the undergrowth spreading its tail. Bill and eye dark and the legs pale. New to Benin. Rare in Togo, with only a single 1989 record from the Koué River in the Fazao Mountains (08°16'N 00°43'E)<sup>4</sup>, whilst in Nigeria it is considered a 'not uncommon and local resident...right across the forest zone from Lagos to Calabar'<sup>6</sup>.

On the previous day, in almost the same place, MvdA observed a Bioko Batis in the midstorey at the forest edge. Crown, lores, ear-coverts, upperparts

and uppertail appeared black in the early-morning sun. There was no real supercilium, only a small white spot in front of the eye, and on the nape a tiny stripe extending as a white patch. There were also white spots on the wings. Underparts white, with a dark breast-band. The eye was pale. Although this is not a first Benin record, it is in some ways more interesting. Brunel claimed to have observed it in 1958 at 'Bégon'<sup>3</sup>. This is probably a misspelling of Bohicon (07°0'N 02°04'E), as it occurs in some old literature, and most of Brunel's observations come from this area. Dowsett<sup>5</sup> considered that Brunel's record required further proof, whilst *Birds of Africa* considered it to be extralimital<sup>9</sup>. However, the species occurs in a contiguous area of western Nigeria<sup>6</sup>. It has not been recorded in Togo. It is stated by *Birds of Africa* to be rare throughout<sup>9</sup>. This, then, is a particularly interesting record, confirming Brunel's earlier record and the species' place on the Benin list.

## Acknowledgements

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