

Chapter 7

A rapid survey of the birds of the Boké Préfecture, northwestern Guinea

Ron Demey

SUMMARY

During 15 days of field work in Boké Préfecture, 239 bird species were recorded: 145 at Site 1 (Sarabaya), 151 at Site 2 (Kamsar: five subsites) and 140 at Site 3 (Boulléré, near Sangarédi). Of these, only one is of conservation concern: Baumann's Greenbul *Phyllastrephus baumanni*, which is currently listed as Data Deficient and was found to be locally common in farmbush at Site 1. We added two species to Guinea's published avifauna: Purple Swamphen *Porphyrio porphyrio*, at Site 1, and Icterine Warbler *Hippolais icterina*, at Site 3. Some 50 species were recorded for the first time in the Kamsar and Sangarédi areas and their records represent more or less significant range extensions. Seventeen of the 33 Sudan-Guinea Savanna biome species recorded in Guinea were found during the study.

INTRODUCTION

Birds are good indicators of biological diversity because they occur in most habitats on land throughout the world and are sensitive to environmental change. In addition, bird taxonomy and distribution are better known than for any other large group of animals or plants (ICBP 1992). However, many areas in Africa still lack detailed ornithological data. The avifauna of Guinea is a case in point: it is comparatively poorly known overall and large areas of the country have yet to be surveyed (Robertson 2001a). Except for coastal waterbirds, no ornithological studies had been conducted previously in the Boké area.

We carried out 15 days of field work, five days at Site 1 (23 - 27 April 2005), five days at Site 2, which consisted of five different localities (29 April - 3 May), and five days at Site 3 (5 - 10 May), during which we recorded 239 bird species (Appendix 8), representing 36% of the country's avifauna.

For the purposes of standardization, we have followed the nomenclature, taxonomy and sequence of Borrow and Demey (2001 and 2004).

METHODS

The principal method used during this study consisted of observing birds by walking slowly along tracks and trails. Notes were taken on both visual observations and bird vocalizations. Some tape-recordings were made for later deposition in sound archives. Attempts were made to visit as many habitats as possible. Field work was carried out from just before dawn (usually 06:00) until 14:00-16:00, and on a few occasions from 17:00 until sunset (around 19:20). Some species were recorded opportunistically during the night. No mist-netting was carried out.

For each field day a list was compiled of all the species that were recorded. Numbers of individuals or flocks were noted, as well as any evidence of breeding, such as the presence of juveniles, and basic information on the habitat in which the birds were observed. No attempt has been made to give indices of abundance based on the encounter rate, as these would be