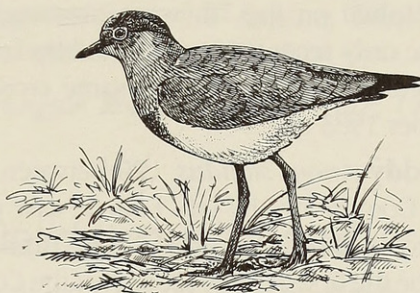


Yellow-legged Weaver *Ploceus flavipes*
Mark Andrews

superciliosus, Bare-cheeked Trogon *Apaloderma aequatoriale*, ten species of Kingfisher including White-bellied *Corythornis leucogaster*, Blue-breasted *Halcyon malimbica* and Chocolate-backed Kingfisher *H. badia*, Black *Merops gularis* and Blue-headed Bee-eater *M. muelleri*, seven species of Hornbill including White-thighed *Ceratogymna cylindricus albotibialis*, Piping *C. fistulator*, Black Casqued Wattled *C. atrata*, White-crested *Tockus albocristatus*, Black Dwarf *T. hartlaubi* and Red-billed Dwarf Hornbill *T. camurus*, Green-breasted Pitta *Pitta reichenowi* and Blue-shouldered Robin-Chat *Cossypha cyanocampter*. An unusual sighting was a European Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe* perched on a rainforest tree. We also observed a pair of Gosling's Apalis *Apalis goslingi* with two recently hatched young which, to our

knowledge, represents a range-extension for this species. The observation of an immature Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus* was further evidence that this species has started very recently to expand its winter range to tropical Africa.



Brown-chested Wattled Lapwing
Vanellus superciliosus
Mark Andrews

For those interested in this outstanding place, an annotated checklist of the avifauna of the Okapi Wildlife Reserve is currently being completed, covering all 379 species recorded to date. It will be available from November 1996 for UK£ 10/US\$ 20 (cash; incl. postage and handling). It can be ordered from M. Sacchi, Breitfeldstrasse 44, CH-3014 Bern, Switzerland.

Breitfeldstrasse 44, 3014 Bern, Switzerland. Tel +(0)31/332 78 12.

Recent observations of birds in the Comoros

Jon Hornbuckle

Introduction

The Comoros islands, situated in the Indian Ocean between Madagascar and Tanzania, consist of the Islamic Republic of the Comoros and the French protectorate of Mayotte, but are rarely visited by birders. I spent two weeks there, from 3–16 November 1995, with Ashley Banwell, Neil Bostock and Alan Lewis. We made a number of interesting observations during our travels on Mayotte and the three main islands of the Comoros — Grand Comore, Anjouan and Moheli.

Wilson's Storm-Petrel *Oceanites oceanicus*. A single bird seen on the 7th, 3–4 km offshore from Moheli near MiChaco, the rocky islet nesting site for Masked Boobies *Sula dactylatra*, and two noted on the crossing between Moheli and Grand Comore on the 9th appear to be only the second and third records for the Comoros¹.

Masked Booby *Sula dactylatra*. c80 nesting at M'Chaco, some 5 km off the coast of Moheli, on the 7th.

Reunion (Malagasy) Harrier *Circus maillardi*. A pair above La Convalescence on Mt Karthala, Grand

Comore on the 4th; at least 4 birds around Kangani on the 7th and one bird on the ridge above Fomboni, Moheli, on the 9th. These records indicate that this numerically scarce species may be fairly widespread.

Frances' Goshawk (Sparrowhawk) *Accipiter francesii*. Apart from a single record from Grand Comore, this species was only seen on Mayotte where there was a territorial pair and at least one other bird at Combani on the 14–15th.

Eleonora's Falcon *Falco eleonora*. Singles at Moroni, Grand Comore on the 9th; Kangani, Moheli on the 7th, and Lac Dzilandze, Anjouan on the 12–13th. Three birds at Combani, Mayotte on the 14th are likely to have been on passage, presumably to Madagascar. The only previous confirmed records were two on Moroni in Nov 1831 and one on Mt Karthala on 8 April 1902.

Little Stint *Calidris minuta*. One at Padmanzi Lagoon on the 15th appears to be the first record for Mayotte and only the third record for the Comoros³.

Common Tern *Sterna hirundo*. Two between Moheli

and Grand Comore on the 9th appears to be the first record for the Comoros³.

Bridled Tern *Sterna anaethetus*. Common (500+) between Moheli and Grand Comore on the 9th and several Bridled/Sooty *S. fuscata* Terns offshore at Fomboni, Moheli on the 7th were presumably this species. The only recent record quoted by Louette is of 88 Bridled/Sooty Terns on the same crossing on 23 September 1983³.

Brown Noddy *Anous stolidus*. c20 between Moheli and Grand Comore on the 9th. Louette saw noddies but failed to identify them specifically, and so this appears to be the first definite record for the Comoros.

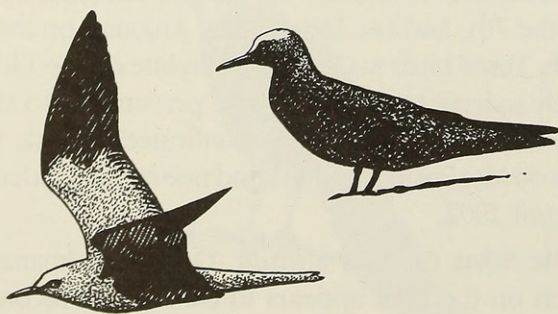
Malagasy Scops-Owl *Otus rutilus mayottensis*. Two were located in secondary, disturbed woodland near Combani, Mayotte on the 14th without much effort, indicating that the taxon is not uncommon and able to inhabit much of the habitat available on the island. It appeared distinct from the Madagascar mainland form.

Anjouan Scops-Owl *Otus capnodes*. Two, of different colour phases, were observed on the 12th at night above Lac Dzilandze, possibly the first ever field studies, while at least two others were heard calling, mostly in flight².

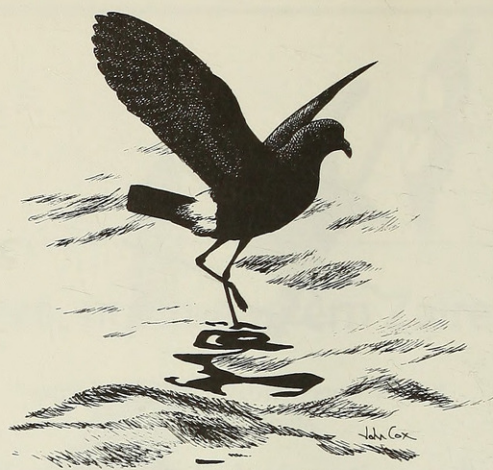
Comoro (Karthala) Scops-Owl *Otus pauliani*. One seen but only one other heard at La Convalescence, Grand Comore on the 4th. Although there is still a substantial tract of montane forest on Mount Karthala, this could change since there is no evidence of it being protected.

Broad-billed Roller *Eurystomus glaucurus*. One at Lac Dzilandze, Anjouan on the 12th, as recorded by R. Safford⁴ — the eighth record for the Comoros.

(Grand) Comoro Drongo *Dicrurus fuscipennis*. The only observation of this highly endangered species was of a pair feeding two, approximately one-week-old young in the nest at 930 m at Kourani, Grand Comore on the 11th¹. It was not found in the main tract of forest below La Convalescence. The nest was at a height of c7 m in a fork of an outer branch.



Brown Noddy *Anous stolidus*
Mark Andrews



Wilson's Storm-Petrel *Oceanites oceanicus*
John Cox

The male fed the female at the nest twice in 40 minutes and she fed the young.

Mayotte Drongo *D. waldenii*. Eight at Combani, Mayotte, on the 14th included one on a nest in disturbed secondary woodland. This species appears to have adapted to human encroachment and so is not in the critical condition of the above species.

Grand Comoro (Humblot's) Flycatcher *Humblotia flavirostris*. Five in rainforest below La Convalescence, Grand Comore, on the 4–5th. These records suggest that this species is fairly numerous in its local and vulnerable habitat.

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*. One perched on electricity wires at Fomboni, Moheli, on the 8th appears to be only the second record for the Comoros, the first being two on Grand Comore on 22 October 1831.

Comoro (Karthala) White-eye *Zosterops mouro-niensis*. Common in the tree heather above La Convalescence, Grand Comore, on the 4th, but a highly specialised and local habitat.

Moheli (Short-tailed) Brush-Warbler *Nesillas mariae*. A pair at 415 m above Fomboni, Moheli, on the 8th was the only record, suggesting that this species may possibly be in a more perilous situation than the 'Vulnerable' status currently accorded to it, especially since deforestation appears to be continuing apace¹.

We saw all the endemic taxa on the islands except for Francesi Goshawk *Accipiter francesii pusillus*, Madagascar Green-Pigeon *Treron australis griveaudi*, Crested Drongo *Dicrurus forficatus potior*, Madagascar Cuckoo-shrike *Coracina cinerea mobeliensis* and Blue Vanga *Cyanolanius madagascarinus bensoni*. It would have been easy to have missed the accipiter but the absence of the other four taxa suggests that they may be in a 'Vulnerable' or even 'Critical' condition.

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Semipalmated Sandpiper *Calidris pusilla* and
Spotted Sandpiper *Actitis macularia* in Morocco

Mark Andrews

The River Sous on Morocco's Atlantic coast just south of Agadir is an important resting place for large numbers of waders, gulls and terns, especially during the migration period. Whilst visiting the area on 5 May 1995 I found that the incoming tide was bringing large numbers of waders, particularly *Calidris* sandpipers in summer plumage, to gather and feed in the narrow channels adjacent to the King's palace. Given the excellent light conditions and the birds' proximity, I positioned myself slightly upstream and sat and watched as the birds filtered down toward me. These were predominantly Little Stint *Calidris minuta* with smaller numbers of Dunlin *C. alpina* and Curlew Sandpiper *C. ferruginea*.

Amongst the beautifully rich and dapper Little Stints appeared a classically 'odd' bird, roughly the same size though bulkier with a shorter primary projection and slightly heavier, blunt-tipped bill. It lacked the warm 'foxy' colouration and showed no trace of the mantle braces so evident in its congeners. The combination of structure and plumage features meant the bird had to be an adult Semipalmated Sandpiper in breeding plumage, an age with which I was unfamiliar. My experience was based on observations of first-year birds in the UK. Having been disturbed by some over zealous horse riders the bird disappeared for a short while before I found it once again feeding amongst the Little Stint and took the following notes.

Structure

Slightly bulkier, more pot-bellied than accompanying Little Stints with an obviously shorter primary projection.

Bare parts

Bill: black, heavier with a much stouter base and a classic 'blob' tip.

Legs: black, distinct palmations between outer and

middle toes very difficult to see except as the bird walked toward observer pausing momentarily.

Plumage

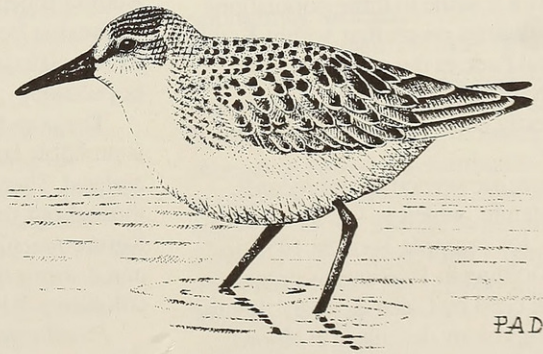
Head: crown streaking appeared darker over the buff ground colour and gave a slight 'capped' appearance. Lores and ear coverts darker with more diffuse smudging. Supercilium to nape whiter with distinctly more pronounced sooty streaking.

Upperparts: generally dull looking with the ground colour of the mantle slightly 'buffy' but lacking any warm rufous tones. Distinctly pale-centred coverts lacking rufous fringes and contrasting sharply with dark centred scapulars. Rather plain sooty-grey-centred tertials with pale off-white fringes. Primaries black.

Underparts: White with distinctly streaked breast and foreflanks.

No call was heard since the bird was never isolated from the main group of waders.

In attempting later to relocate the bird for colleagues, I noticed a sudden splash nearby that diverted our attention. After bathing frantically in a small muddy pool some 10 m away, a small dark wader emerged onto dry land. It was a stunning Spotted Sandpiper *Actitis macularia* in full breeding plumage. The magic of vagrancy!



Semipalmated Sandpiper *Calidris pusilla*
Pete Dennis



Hornbuckle, Jon. 1997. "Recent observations of birds in the Comoros." *Bulletin of the African Bird Club* 4(1), 43–45. <https://doi.org/10.5962/p.308930>.

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