

# Extension of known range of the African Black Duck *Anas sparsa* in West Africa

by J. Frank Walsh

Received 6 February 1985

On 26 October 1984, while flying about 400 feet above ground level in a helicopter, I noticed a medium sized blackish duck flying low along the Djilemba River (8°35.5'N, 8°15'W) in the Beyla district of eastern Guinea (Conakry). I considered that it was probably an African Black Duck *Anas sparsa*, but the view was brief and in poor light. On 17 November 1984 a medium sized blackish duck was again seen from a helicopter in the same general area, but this time on the Gbé River, draining the Massif de Soseri (8°41'N, 8°12'W). On this occasion the bird was seen in good light from a height of about 200 feet, as it flew upstream for a distance of about 100 metres, before disappearing under overhanging trees. It was noted as a dark brown or dull black duck of the *Anas* type, about the same size as a Wigeon *Anas penelope*. A white wing bar above the speculum, presumably formed by white tips to the upper greater wing coverts, was clearly visible. A landing was made but the duck could not be flushed. However, while I was later collecting aquatic invertebrates from the stream bed it flew overhead downstream into the sun. The brief view offered was enough to confirm the impression of size already gained and to confirm that the face, neck and body beneath were concolourous with the upper parts. Thus there can be no doubt that this second observation was that of *Anas sparsa*, a species which I had previously seen in Kenya.

*Anas sparsa* has previously been recorded in the extreme east of Nigeria, in streams on the Mambilla Plateau at a location known as Yelwa (Hall 1977). Both Snow (1978: 54) and Brown *et al.* (1982: 262) have incorrectly mapped this as the well known large town of Yelwa which is situated on the bank of the River Niger in northwestern Nigeria. The present observations represent an extension of known range of about 2000 km to the west of the Mambilla area.

Both sightings in Guinea were of ducks flying along clear, rocky, well-wooded streams in mountainous country, though at no great altitude. The streams were very similar to those occupied by *A. sparsa* in Kenya, a habitat type usually avoided by other species of duck in Africa. In the region between the Mambilla Plateau and Guinea Republic such streams are restricted to a very small area on the Togo-Ghana border. There is an extensive montane area in Guinea but although about 30 other streams were surveyed by helicopter no other duck were sighted.

*Acknowledgement:* I am grateful to Dr R. A. Cheke for commenting on an earlier draft of this note.

## References:

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Walsh, J. Frank. 1985. "EXTENSION OF KNOWN RANGE OF THE AFRICAN BLACK DUCK ANAS-SPARSA IN WEST AFRICA." *Bulletin of the British Ornithologists' Club* 105, 117–117.

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