

north from their curiously restricted natural ranges on the interior plateau of Tanzania, where they inhabit grassland with scattered trees, breeding in baobabs (Moreau, 1948). Yet local escapes at Nairobi, Dar-es-Salaam and elsewhere are able to survive. More field work is required on parrots and parakeets generally to ascertain feeding requirements, breeding, distribution, etc. Published information is scanty, and distributions often ill-defined. The status and distribution of the various indigenous forms in Kenya could be affected, should escapes become adapted and spread, as may already be happening. It is important to ascertain the factors which prevent the spread of indigenous forms but might allow escapes to do so.

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Notes on Tripolitanian Birds

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The area comprises the former Italian province of Tripolitania, extending from the Mediterranean coast, south to about 28° N. and from the western border of Libya to 17° E. Large areas are difficult of access and impossible to cover adequately, such as the Hamada el Hamra or Red Desert, which lies east of Ghadames and south of the Jebel Nafusa. In contrast, roads have led to concentrated observations for the area adjoining the sea, and have made fairly thorough exploration possible in the Jebel Nafusa. The geography is given by Guichard (1956).

Our observations were of varying intensity between 15th July, 1964, and 1st July, 1967. We lived in or near Tripoli town for this period, and daily counts of birds were made, especially around Idris airport, 28 km. south of the coast. Frequent excursions were made to the Tunisian border in the west, as far as Sirte in the east, and to the Fezzan (Sebha oasis) in the south.

The following notes are intended to supplement the existing literature for the area, especially the more important works by Moreau (1961), Etchéco-par & Hue (1967) (E. & H.) and Heim de Balsac & Mayaud (1962) (H. de B. & M.). As Moreau says, the western half of Libya is better covered ornithologically by N. African standards, but the literature is still brief and sketchy, with the possible exception of Guichard (1957). With the exception of Snow & Manning (1954), Johnson (1949) and Cavazza (1932), no observations seem to have been made in autumn. Cavazza, however, never seems to have been present in August or September.

Our preoccupation with migrants rather overshadowed the study of breeding species. Future workers in this region might well consider concentrating on breeding birds. Of the 265 for which we can find records, we saw 235 species, 20 apparently new for the area. Our list includes 66 breeding species, six of which we found breeding for the first time. The general pattern of visible migration is as described by Moreau; migrants, especially

passerines, are more conspicuous and numerous in spring, but autumn movements of Ardeidae and Threskiornithidae are sometimes spectacular.

When comparing our migrants with the charts compiled by Moreau, we have categorized degrees of abundance with the number of seemingly individual occurrences/birds as follows. "Rare" 0-5, "Uncommon" 6-20, "Not uncommon" 20-50, "Fairly common" 50-100, "Common" 100+.

A full list has been prepared and deposited in the Edward Grey Institute, Oxford, England. The nomenclature follows Vaurie (1959-65).

Podiceps ruficollis. Little Grebe

About 6 pairs at Tawarga on some reed-fringed pools, eggs 25 April. First breeding record for Tripolitania.

Ardea cinerea. Heron

Winter visitor and passage migrant, though recorded in every month. Largest movement, 136 birds flying S.W. in a long line, 11 Sept., 1965, over the Wadi Kaam. Smaller numbers were regularly seen moving west along the coast in Aug. and Sept., and a few going east from early April until 30 June, the spring passage being much lighter than the autumn one.

Ardea purpurea. Purple Heron

More numerous autumn than spring, between late July and mid-Nov., juveniles predominating. H. de B. & M. also cite the Fezzan and Ghat in autumn. A few adults in the coastal wadis from Mar. to May.

Egretta alba. Great White Egret

One in the Wadi Kaam 10 Oct. until 5 Dec., 1965.

Egretta garzetta. Little Egret

Winter visitor to the coast, but a marked passage occurs also, being more numerous April and May than in Sept. In spring some birds were seen in dry, semi-desert areas, such as Idris airport on 24 April, 1965, and a flock of 17 on the Azizia plain on 2 May, 1965.

Ardeola ralloides. Squacco Heron

Passage migrant Mar.-May and July-Oct., again more numerous in autumn. 38 seen in Tripoli harbour 25 Aug., 1964, and 20 going east over Khoms, 6 Sept., 1964. Records from the interior were few, but single birds in April at Ghadames and Sebha oases. H. de B. & M. cite Fezzan, Djanet and Ghat for autumn.

Nycticorax nycticorax. Night Heron

An immature at Wadi Kaam on 6 Nov. and 5 Dec., 1965; an adult there on 15 Jan., 1966. Otherwise a small passage from late Mar. to mid-May and possibly fewer between mid-July and Oct.

Ixobrychus minutus. Little Bittern

More numerous than indicated by Guichard. It is not uncommon in the few wadis April and May, though less common between Aug. and Oct. On 8 May, 1965, 15 were flushed from a tamarisk bush by the Wadi Kaam. In autumn mainly immatures.

Ciconia ciconia. White Stork

Only seen between mid-Mar. and 12 June on dry steppe, especially the Azizia plain, with up to 26 on 17 April, 1965.

Platalea leucorodia. Spoonbill

Winters further east than shown by E. & H. Up to 3 on Wadi Kaam between Oct. and Feb. Most together, 10 in the west off Pisida 12 Mar., 1966.

Plegadis falcinellus. Glossy Ibis

Not uncommon Mar.–May in coastal wadis and frequently in isolated oases and water-holes in sub-desert. Commoner in autumn when, however, it was only seen on the coast, though H. de B. & M. mention Ghat (Fezzan) Sept. and Oct. Largest flocks 110 going west on 9 Sept. near Garrabulli, and 60 also going west near Tripoli 2 days later.

Anas querquedula. Garganey

Rather uncommon between late Feb. and May, but common along the coast from late July until early Dec. Most 143 at Wadi Kaam 12 Sept., 1965.

Netta rufina. Red-crested Pochard

Only record, a drake at Wadi Kaam 14–20 Nov., 1965.

Melanitta nigra. Common Scoter

Three females in Tripoli harbour between 29 Nov., 1964, and 31 Jan., 1965. The first record for Libya.

Mergus serrator. Red-breasted Merganser

Up to 14 along the coast each winter between early Nov. and late Mar.

Oxyura leucocephala. White-headed Duck

A female Wadi Kaam, 5 Dec., 1965, apparently the first for Libya.

Neophron percnopterus. Egyptian Vulture

Breeds along the escarpment from Jefren to Nalut, but not as widespread as indicated by E. & H. One Jan. record, but chiefly between Mar. and Sept.

Aquila chrysaetos. Golden Eagle

Rare, status uncertain, only records one Jebel Nafusa 15 April, 1967. Probably a vagrant from Tunisia.

Aquila pomarina. Lesser Spotted Eagle

A weak bird, captured at the Wadi Kaam 14 Nov., 1965, was fit to be released after 14 days. One Wadi Turgat 12 April, 1967. E. & H. mention one record for Libya, presumably the undated example in the Tripoli museum.

Hieraëtus fasciatus. Bonelli's Eagle

Two present, around the escarpment near Jefren in April, 1967, may have bred there.

Milvus migrans. Black Kite

Rather uncommon, records of single birds near the coast in May, July, Oct. and Nov. H. de B. & M. mention a few in the Fezzan in Sept.; the 20 seen together by Guichard (1957) at Beni Ulid would seem exceptional.

Pernis apivorus. Honey Buzzard

Our only record is one at Wadi Kaam on 29 Sept., 1965; there are two undated examples in the Tripoli museum.

Circus aeruginosus. Marsh Harrier

A few winter in coastal areas, but chiefly encountered on passage, especially in spring from early Mar. until mid-May, when it is not uncommon over dry ground, notably cereal cultivation.

Circus macrourus. Pallid Harrier.

Not uncommon Feb. – late April, passing earlier than, though overlapping with, *C. pygargus*. Neither this species nor *pygargus* were seen in autumn.

Falco biarmicus. Lanner Falcon

Typical brown examples are not uncommon residents in the hillier parts of the interior, with a few on the coast. A pale grey and white form, which has apparently not been described, was seen fairly often from the coast well into the interior, from Aug. to April. These birds are presumably the same as those mentioned by Smith (1965). In the field they look larger than brown Lanners, blunt-winged, pale grey above with darker primaries, an almost completely white head and underparts. They show very narrow striations on flanks and crown, and a narrow, inconspicuous moustachial stripe, when seen well. The possibility of their being some form of Saker cannot be ruled out. There are no skins resembling these birds in the British Museum (Nat. Hist.).

Falco cherrug. Saker Falcon

One at a coastal wadi east of Garrabulli 17 April, 1967, our only record.

Falco eleonora. Eleonora's Falcon

One passed west at the Wadi Kaam 10 Oct., 1965, and another 17 Oct., 1966. First for Tripolitania.

Falco naumanni. Lesser Kestrel

Spring passage as shown by Moreau, with up to 400 together 19 Mar., 1965, near Khoms. A few were found breeding along coastal cliffs and in ruins east of Tripoli in 1965 and 1966, apparently the first known to breed in the area.

Rallus aquaticus. Water Rail

Individuals winter at Wadi Kaam and Tawarga, where one in dense reed beds on 25 April, 1965, could have been breeding.

Porzana parva. Little Crane

Passage migrant in coastal wadis, not uncommon April–May, uncommon Sept.–Oct.

Porzana pusilla. Baillon's Crane

The only records are one at Wadi Turgat 30 Mar., 1965, and one undated example in the Tripoli museum.

Porzana porzana. Spotted Crane

We saw rather more than Guichard (1957), especially during Mar., with some until May. Seen again from Sept. until 20 Dec., all in coastal wadis.

Gallinula chloropus. Moorhen

Not proved breeding, though adults were present in two coastal wadis until 30 May, 1965, with many immatures present during Sept. Breeds Fezzan (H. de B. & M.). Probably mainly a passage migrant. It is fairly common in the few suitable areas in April and May, and from Sept. until Dec.; rare in remaining months. One freshly dead Hon oasis (29° N. 16° E.) on the Fezzan road 17 Jan., 1966. Very shy and retiring, owing to heavy persecution by local gunners, it could have been overlooked while breeding, especially at Tawarga.

Fulica atra. Coot

Winter visitor, Sept.–April. Uncommon 1964/65, but numerous 1965/66, with up to 400 together Wadi Kaam.

Chlamydotis undulata. Houbara Bustard

Distribution as in H. de B. & M., but much persecuted, and certainly now less common than indicated by Johnson (1949).

Charadrius dubius. Little Ringed Plover

E. & H. show this species breeding throughout the coastal region and extending inland. We found no evidence of breeding, though between Mar. and May migrants were common and often indulged in brief song flights and aerial pursuits. Fairly common again from July to Nov., chiefly on coastal wadis but also on seasonal water in semi-desert areas. One 16 Jan., 1967, at Wadi Kaam.

Charadrius leschenaultii. Great Sand Plover

One with Kentish Plovers, at the Wadi Kaam on 6 Oct., 1965. The only record for Tripolitania.

Eudromius morinellus. Dotterel

Winter visitor from Sept.–April, sometimes associating with Golden Plovers. Found in widely scattered semi-desert areas, flocks may have been overlooked. Maximum together 200, Idris airport 10 Nov., 1964. Fewer there 1965/66, when up to 60.

Capella media. Great Snipe

Guichard shot one in Mar., 1952. Our records include one Mar., 1965, one Mar., 1966, and another in April, 1967, all in coastal areas.

Limosa lapponica. Bar-tailed Godwit

Guichard saw one in Aug. Our only record was one at Zuara on the coast, 12 Oct., 1965.

Tringa glareola. Wood Sandpiper

Fairly common in the wadis along the coast, and Sebka pools, Mar.–May, July–Oct. Only 3 records Nov.–Jan., and certainly does not winter commonly here, as implied by E. & H. *T. ochropus* is also scarce in winter here, though occurs during much the same periods as *T. glareola* on passage.

Tringa erythropus. Spotted Redshank

E. & H. mention none wintering and refer to it as “not very common”. We saw up to 6 together in Jan. at Wadi Kaam and Misurata. On passage it is not uncommon April–May and Aug.–Nov. in coastal areas.

Tringa stagnatalis. Marsh Sandpiper

Only seen in Mar. and April in several widespread coastal localities, from the Tunisian border eastwards, and once inland.

Calidris minuta. Little Stint

Common winter visitor along the coast, more on passage. Around 50 winter at the coastal wadis Kaam and Turgat, though during May this number reaches 200.

Calidris temminckii. Temminck's Stint

A passage migrant, not uncommon late Mar. to mid-May and Sept.–Oct. on the coastal wadis. During Jan. and Feb., 1966, 8 near Tripoli.

Calidris ferruginea. Curlew Sandpiper

E. & H. call this chiefly a winter visitor to N. Africa. In this area, uncommon passage migrant on the coast April–May and Sept.–Oct., none being seen between Oct. and April.

Calidris alba. Sanderling

Commoner than indicated by E. & H., wintering along coast from Oct.–May. Larger numbers in May suggest some passage.

Limicola falcinellus. Broad-billed Sandpiper

Singles at the Wadi Kaam, 6 Oct., 10 Oct., and two there 14 Nov., 1965. Guichard shot one there in Aug., 1953.

Philomachus pugnax. Ruff

Chiefly a passage migrant, Mar.–May and July–Oct. when it is fairly common. H. de B. & M. admit as only on passage in N. Africa, but small numbers winter. 130 at the Wadi Kaam 27 Feb., 1966, may have been the result of a cold weather movement from Europe. Only three were there 19 Mar.

Himantopus himantopus. Black-winged Stilt

Not uncommon on passage Mar.–May and July–Oct., though none in winter as stated by H. de B. & M. for Tunisia.

Burhinus oedicnemus. Stone Curlew

We found this species only in April, June and Aug. in widely scattered desert areas. One was seen flying in from the sea, Tripoli, 21 Oct., 1966.

Cursorius cursor. Cream-coloured Courser

A fairly common resident in steppe and sub-desert zones. Juveniles were present near the coast at the Wadi Kaam by July in 1965 and 1966. A display flight was seen over desert at 07.00 hours on 5 June, 1965; a bird was circling high in wide spirals on quick beating wings, uttering the typical “qwut-qwut” note, followed repeatedly by a low, grating sound.

Stercorarius skua. Great Skua

One flying east off the Wadi Kaam 28 Sept., 1965, is apparently the first for Libya.

Stercorarius parasiticus. Arctic Skua

One 21 Mar., 1965, two together 6 Mar., 1966, and one 26 Feb., 1967, all close to the shore off Tripoli, are the first records for Libya.

Larus canus. Common Gull

Three adults at Khoms 19 Dec., 1964, and one 13 Nov., 1965, Tripoli harbour, are the first records for Libya.

Larus audouinii. Audouin's Gull

Regular in winter, records from Aug.–April, usually met with in small groups. One concentration of 72 birds (66 adults) at Misurata 16 Jan., 1966, was exceptional.

Larus genei. Slender-billed Gull

Not uncommon in winter from Oct.–April, almost entirely around Tripoli town, though a few in coastal wadis. Up to 40 in Tripoli harbour, chiefly immatures with larger numbers of *L. ridibundus*.

Larus melanocephala. Mediterranean Gull

Winter visitor to the coast, almost confined, as mentioned by Waters (1963), to the coastal towns. Numbers vary with weather conditions. Over 200 Tripoli, 12 Dec., 1965, during a gale (15 % adults).

Larus minutus. Little Gull

Usually present in small numbers in Tripoli harbour from Oct.–April. Adults, like *L. melanocephala*, were only seen in rough weather, when up to 100 were present, suggesting that they are largely pelagic outside the breeding season.

[to be continued]



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