

INTRODUCTION

AREA COVERED

This work illustrates and briefly describes all species definitely recorded from western Africa, as well as some that have been claimed but whose occurrence requires proof.

Western Africa, as defined here and subsequently defined as ‘the region’, comprises the 23 countries, south of the Sahara, from Mauritania in the northwest, to Chad and the Central African Republic in the east, and Congo-Brazzaville in the southeast, including the Cape Verde and Gulf of Guinea islands. The term ‘region’ is used in a general sense and does not indicate an avifaunal/biogeographical region or subregion. For ease of reference, all range states considered to comprise western Africa are covered in their entirety; thus parts of northern Mauritania, Niger and Chad that are generally considered within the Western Palearctic are included. The four principal Gulf of Guinea islands comprise Bioko (formerly Fernando Po), Príncipe, São Tomé and Annobón (formerly Pagalú). Bioko and Annobón form part of Equatorial Guinea.

Since the publication of our *Birds of Western Africa* (2001, hereafter abbreviated as *BOWA*) six additional species have been documented from the region: Great Blue Heron *Ardea herodias* (Hazevoet 2003), Ring-necked Duck *Aythya collaris* (Hazevoet 2003), Sociable Lapwing *Vanellus gregarius* (Messemaker 2004), Greater Yellowlegs *Tringa melanoleuca* (Hazevoet 2003), Moussier’s Redstart *Phoenicurus moussieri* (Salewski *et al.* 2003) and Yellow-browed Warbler *Phylloscopus inornatus* (Cruse 2004). Three species are no longer considered to occur: Nyanza Swift *Apus niansae* (Herroelen 2003), Variable Indigobird *Vidua funerea* and Eurasian Rock Bunting *Emberiza cia* (Fry & Keith 2004).

In total, 1304 species (including some potential species) are treated.

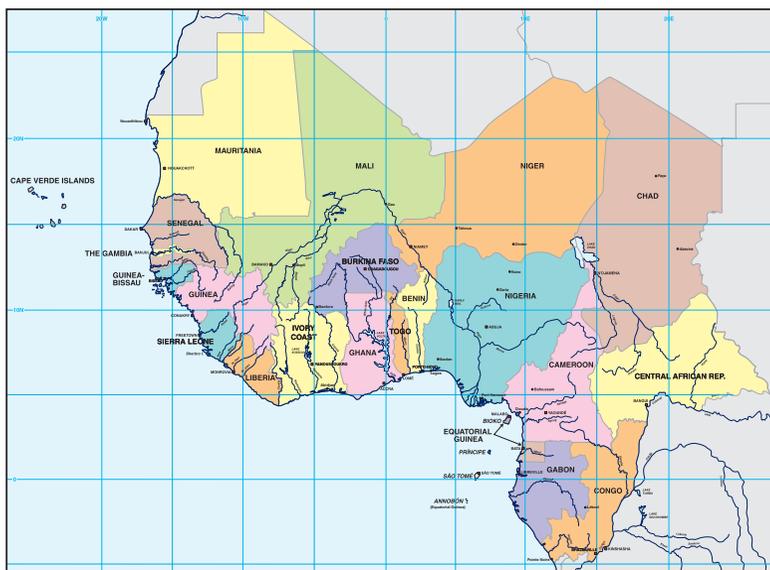


Figure 1. Western Africa.

NOMENCLATURE

Taxonomy and scientific names

In general, we have followed *The Birds of Africa*, vols 1–7 (Brown *et al.* 1982; Urban *et al.* 1986, 1997; Keith *et al.* 1992; Fry *et al.* 1988, 2000; Fry & Keith 2004; hereafter abbreviated as *BoA*), although in some cases we have preferred Dowssett & Forbes-Watson (1993), del Hoyo *et al.* (1992–2003), Dickinson (2003) or other recent authors, where these adopt what we consider a more advanced or consistent view.

In a few cases, where a taxon has been variably treated as a subspecies or a species by different authors, the taxon has been treated under a separate English name, but to indicate that this does not imply an undisputed taxonomic decision, the specific name under which it is also often treated is placed within parentheses. This has been done where there is strong evidence to suggest that the taxon may preferably be treated as a separate species, e.g. *Bostrychia (oliacea) bocagei*, *Bubo (bubo) ascalaphus* and *Saxicola (torquatus) rubicola*, or in the, rather few, cases where evidence suggests that forms treated as full species by *BoA* may actually best be ‘lumped’ again, e.g. *Indicator (minor) conirostris*, *Acrocephalus (scirpaceus) baeticus* and *Eremomela (icteropygialis) salvadorii*.

We have been rather more ‘liberal’ in treating forms separately than in *BOWA*, thus following a current trend. Name changes are explained below.

Changes in the scientific name resulting from the correction of the gender

Scientific names have been corrected following David & Gosse (2002a,b). These are, in alphabetical order:

Alopochen aegyptiaca, *Amaurornis flavirostris*, *Ammomanes cinctura*, *Bleda canicapillus*, *Bleda eximius*, *Bleda notatus*, *Bleda syndactylus*, *Butorides striata*, *Chlidonias hybrida*, *Cinnyris coccinigastrus*, *Cinnyris osea*, *Cisticola fulvicapilla*, *Columba livia gymnocyclus*, *Delichon urbicum*, *Euplectes macroura*, *Halcyon senegalensis fuscipennis*, *Heliolais erythropterus*, *Nigrita canicapillus*, *Nigrita fusconotus*, *Numida meleagris galeatus*, *Phalaropus fulicarius*, *Ploceus nigrimentus*, *Saxicola torquatus*, *Saxicola torquatus moplatus*, *Schoenicola platyrus*, *Tchagra senegalus*, *Tigriornis leucolopha*, *Treron cabanus*, *Turdoides fulva*, *Turdoides reinwardtii stictilaema*, *Turdoides tenebrosa*, *Turnix hottentottus*, *Turnix sylvaticus*, *Urolais epichlorus*.

New scientific names resulting from taxonomic changes

Name used in <i>BOWA</i> (2001)	Name used in this book	References
<i>Diomedea melanophris</i>	<i>Thalassarche melanophris</i>	Knox <i>et al.</i> (2002), Sangster <i>et al.</i> (2002), Dickinson (2003)
<i>Diomedea chlororhynchos</i>	<i>Thalassarche chlororhynchos</i>	Knox <i>et al.</i> (2002), Sangster <i>et al.</i> (2002), Dickinson (2003)
<i>Phoenicopterus roseus</i>	<i>Phoenicopterus ruber</i>	Knox <i>et al.</i> (2002).
<i>Eupodotis savilei</i>	<i>Lophotis savilei</i>	del Hoyo <i>et al.</i> (1996), Dickinson (2003)
<i>Eupodotis melanogaster</i>	<i>Lissotis melanogaster</i>	del Hoyo <i>et al.</i> (1996), Dickinson (2003)
<i>Catharacta skua</i>	<i>Stercorarius skua</i>	Dickinson (2003), Sangster <i>et al.</i> (2004)
<i>Catharacta maccormicki</i>	<i>Stercorarius maccormicki</i>	Dickinson (2003), Sangster <i>et al.</i> (2004)

<i>Caprimulgus binotatus</i>	<i>Veles binotatus</i>	Cleere (2001), Dickinson (2003)
<i>Cinnyris obscura</i>	<i>Cinnyris olivaceus</i>	Dickinson (2003)
<i>Passer motitensis</i>	<i>Passer cordofanicus</i>	BoA
<i>Ploceus superciliosus</i>	<i>Pachyphantes superciliosus</i>	BoA
<i>Ortygospiza locustella</i>	<i>Paludipasser locustella</i>	BoA
<i>Amandava subflava</i>	<i>Sporaeginthus subflavus</i>	BoA
<i>Lonchura cucullata</i>	<i>Spermestes cucullatus</i>	BoA
<i>Lonchura bicolor</i>	<i>Spermestes bicolor</i>	BoA
<i>Lonchura fringilloides</i>	<i>Spermestes fringilloides</i>	BoA
<i>Lonchura cantans</i>	<i>Eudice cantans</i>	BoA
<i>Miliaria calandra</i>	<i>Emberiza calandra</i>	Dickinson (2003), Sangster <i>et al.</i> (2004)

African Masked Weaver *Ploceus velatus*, treated as a single species in BOWA (2001) is now considered to consist of two species, Vitelline Masked Weaver *P. vitellinus* and Southern Masked Weaver *P. velatus* (BoA).

English names

With the aim of establishing a standardised world list of English names, many novel bird names have been coined in recent years, which has often resulted in confusion and frustration for users of ornithological works. In order to avoid further complication, we have principally followed BoA, supplemented by Dowssett & Forbes-Watson (1993), even if we do not personally favour the name chosen. Where these sources offer alternatives, we have chosen the name most commonly used in western Africa. Where Palearctic bird names, as listed by Beaman (1994), differ from these, based on convincing rationale, we have followed the latter. If none of these three sources proposes a name (e.g. in certain cases arising from taxonomic uncertainty), or if none of the proposed names is in frequent usage in western African ornithological literature, we have used other sources.

We have not, however, followed BoA's controversial spelling of some names. Debate principally centres on the use of hyphenation and capitalisation. We agree with Beaman (1994) that the current fashion of introducing hyphens into bird names is both inconsistent and ugly, and have therefore used hyphens only when we considered it essential. A clear and consistent explanation of the use of hyphens is given by Inskipp *et al.* (1996), and their reasoning, which is briefly reproduced hereafter, has been largely followed here. They state that hyphens in group names should be used in two circumstances:

1. to link two nouns in apposition
2. between an adjective and a noun, but only in cases to avoid a misleading impression of the species' relationships.

Truly apposed nouns appear to be rare in bird names and most qualifying words within a group name that seem to be nouns are actually adjectival nouns, i.e. nouns functioning as adjectives that, for construction purposes, should be treated as ordinary adjectives and, therefore, should not take a hyphen. Thus, a snake eagle is a 'snake-eating eagle', not a 'snake-eagle' (the latter implies an unlikely intermediate between a snake and an eagle!). Adjectival nouns are abbreviations and can be identified as such if it makes sense to add a suffix such as -like, -sized, -billed, -eating, -nesting, -loving, -dwelling, or -driven. Examples: Tiger Heron, Night Heron, Cuckoo Hawk, Bat Hawk, Fish Eagle, Stone Partridge, Water Rail, Wood Dove, Grass Owl, Bush Lark, Hoopoe Lark, Sand Martin, Cliff Swallow, Ant Thrush, Scrub Robin, Robin Chat, Ground Thrush, Reed Warbler, Swamp Warbler, Wren Warbler, Woodland Warbler, Forest Flycatcher, Hill Babbler, Thrush Babbler, Sparrow Weaver, etc.

Names such as Scops Owl or Turtle Dove are more obscure but their qualifiers will probably also be demonstrated to be adjectival. Thus, they function in the same way as a combination of an overt adjective with a noun, as in Crested Tern, Green Pigeon, Crested Flycatcher, Penduline Tit and Glossy Starling.

Hyphens are placed between nouns and adjectives (or adjectival nouns) only in the interests of matching English with scientific classification. Painted Snipes and Cuckoo Shrikes are not, respectively, snipes and shrikes. The two components of the name are therefore better hyphenated, with the initial letter of the second word being in lower case: Painted-snipe and Cuckoo-shrike. (Hyphenated constructions with the initial letter of the second word being capitalised, e.g. ‘Cuckoo-Shrike’, are not used in this book.) It is, however, impossible to apply this rule consistently within a family and in some cases it appears preferable to leave well-established names unhyphenated, e.g. European Honey Buzzard (Beaman 1994, *contra* Inskipp *et al.* 1996).

The use of a terminal ‘s’ in possessives is retained in all cases, including those of personal names ending in an ‘s’ sound, following Dowsett & Forbes-Watson (1993) and other recent authors; thus Ayres’s and Bates’s.

New English names

In a few cases we have replaced the English name of a species used in *BOWA* (2001) by the one used in *BoA*’s last volume. *Glaucidium sjoestedti* (previously Chestnut-backed Owlet) has become Sjöstedt’s Owlet in order to avoid confusion with the similarly named *G. castanonotum*. *Telophorus viridis* (previously Gorgeous Bush-shrike) has been given its old and widely accepted name again, Perrin’s Bush-shrike, in order to distinguish it from extralimital forms that have been lumped with it. In all these cases the previously used name has been put within parentheses.

Name used in <i>BOWA</i> (2001)	Name used in this book	References
Short-toed Eagle	Short-toed Snake Eagle	del Hoyo <i>et al.</i> (1999)
Chestnut-backed Owlet	Sjöstedt’s Owlet	del Hoyo <i>et al.</i> (1999), Dickinson (2003)
Gorgeous Bush-shrike	Perrin’s Bush-shrike	Bannerman (1939, 1953), Mackworth-Praed & Grant (1973)
Preuss’s Golden-backed Weaver	Preuss’s Weaver	<i>BoA</i>
Black-winged Red Bishop	Black-winged Bishop	<i>BoA</i>
Marsh Widowbird	Hartlaub’s Marsh Widowbird	<i>BoA</i>
Grey-crowned Negrofinch	Grey-headed Negrofinch	<i>BoA</i>
Red-headed Antpecker	Woodhouse’s Antpecker	<i>BoA</i>
Little Oliveback	Shelley’s Oliveback	<i>BoA</i>
White-checked Oliveback	Grey-headed Oliveback	<i>BoA</i>
Reichenow’s Firefinch	Chad Firefinch	<i>BoA</i>
African Quailfinch	Black-faced Quailfinch	<i>BoA</i>
Parasitic Weaver	Cuckoo Finch	<i>BoA</i>
Cut-throat	Cut-throat Finch	<i>BoA</i>
Baka Indigobird	Barka Indigobird	<i>BoA</i>

THE PLATE CAPTIONS

Measurements

To give an indication of the bird's relative size, **length** (in cm) is mentioned after the species name. Wingspan (**WS**) and tail-streamer length are mentioned where relevant. Measurements are taken from authoritative sources, complemented by our own mensural data obtained from specimens. Some measurements from *BOWA* (2001) have been corrected. Total-length measurements represent the length of museum skins stretched out on their backs and measured from bill tip to tail tip. It should be noted that direct comparison of these measurements can be quite misleading because they do not take into account other aspects of physiognomy, such as relative bill, neck and tail length, bulk, etc. It is therefore most useful only when comparing related species.

Status categories

The status of each species is denoted by the following letters (in bold):

- | | | |
|----------|-----------------------|--|
| R | Resident | a species that resides within its range throughout the year and breeds; the opposite of a migrant. |
| M | Intra-African migrant | a species that breeds in one part of Africa and spends the post-breeding season in a different area, or appears only seasonally in another part. |
| P | Palaearctic migrant | a species that breeds in the Palaearctic region (Europe, N Africa and part of Asia) and spends the northern winter in sub-Saharan Africa. |
| V | Vagrant | a species outside its normal range. |

If more than one category is applicable, the commoner is placed first.

It should be appreciated that it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between a genuine vagrant and a species with only a few records. Some 'vagrants' may prove to be more or less regular, if rare or scarce, with increased observer coverage.

Abundance categories

Our aim has been to be as user-friendly as possible. Therefore we use only five, easily understood, abundance categories and one qualifier (**l** = local):

- | | | |
|----------|---------------|---|
| c | common | invariably encountered singly or in significant numbers within its normal habitat |
| f | fairly common | usually, but not invariably, encountered within its normal habitat (= 'not uncommon' in <i>BOWA</i> 2001, or 'frequent' in several other works) |
| u | uncommon | relatively frequently, but not regularly, encountered within its normal habitat |
| s | scarce | only irregularly and infrequently encountered within its normal habitat |
| r | rare | rarely encountered, often implying fewer than <i>c.</i> 10 records. |

The category of the most frequently occurring abundance is placed first; e.g. 'f/s' means that the species is more often (= in more countries) fairly common than scarce; 'u/lc' means 'uncommon to locally common'.

Threatened species

Species included in *Threatened Birds of the World* (BirdLife International 2000) and its most recent update (BirdLife International 2004) are indicated by one of the following letters (in bold):

CR	Threatened (Critical)	species facing an extremely high risk of extinction in the wild in the immediate future.
EN	Threatened (Endangered)	species facing a very high risk of extinction in the wild in the near future.
VU	Threatened (Vulnerable)	species facing a high risk of extinction in the wild in the medium-term future.
NT	Near Threatened	species coming very close to qualifying as threatened.
DD	Data Deficient	species for which there is inadequate information to make an assessment of its risk of extinction.

For a comprehensive discussion of the above categories, see BirdLife International (2000).

Identification features

The most important distinguishing identification features are succinctly given. We have attempted to include as much information as space permitted.

The term 'immature' (used generally for a non-adult bird) has normally not been used to indicate juvenile plumage (the first plumage of true, non-downy, feathers). For young passerines of Palearctic origin wintering in our area, 'immature' indicates 'first-winter' plumage. In some cases 'immature' is used when the available information prevents greater precision. The terms 'winter' and 'summer' refer to northern hemisphere seasons.

If the plumage illustrated is not specifically named, it is the adult plumage. For the sake of brevity, subspecies are indicated by their subspecific name only, when preceded by 'Ad' or 'Juv' (e.g. 'Ad *gabonensis*').

The terms 'small', 'medium-sized' and 'large' indicate only the relative size of a species compared with its close relatives. For the sake of brevity, and when not indicated otherwise (or obviously different), the term 'top of head' includes forehead and crown, 'throat' includes the chin, and 'legs' includes legs and feet. 'Above' generally encompasses head and upperparts, and sometimes also tail; 'below' the entire underparts; in some cases, certain parts are excluded, but this should be obvious from the context. 'Flight feathers' include primaries and secondaries (but not tail feathers). 'Wing feathers' include flight feathers and wing-coverts. 'Upperparts' often includes scapulars and wing-coverts (if concolorous). Study of the illustrations should preclude any confusion.

Colour names have deliberately been kept as simple as possible and most will be readily understood. Where two colours are combined (compound colours), the last named is dominant; in other words, they should be interpreted as the second colour tinged with the first; e.g. reddish-brown is brown tinged red. Where the suffix -ish is added to a colour, this indicates a weaker or less distinct shade of that colour.

Frequently used colours include buff (pale or dull yellowish with a brownish or beige tinge), chestnut (dark reddish-brown), olive (dull yellowish-green, like the fruit), and horn (pale brownish-yellow; used solely for bills). Dusky (dirty greyish or brownish) is often used for rather indistinct darkish markings. The term dark (opposite pale) is used for dark plumage markings that do not possess any obvious colour.

Habitat and behaviour (▲)

The habitat in which the species normally occurs is briefly indicated. Some typical behaviour relevant to identification is mentioned wherever space permitted to do so. If a species is endemic to the region, this has been mentioned.

Voice (♣)

Only the most characteristic vocalisations are (briefly) given. In some cases, where the species is mainly silent or the vocalisations are unimportant for identification purposes, these have been omitted when space was limited. Transcriptions of calls and songs are placed in *italics*. References to Claude Chappuis' (2000) outstanding collection of 15 CDs of *African Bird Sounds* – an invaluable tool – are presented within square brackets, with CD and track number. It should be noted that these CDs inevitably contain certain errors (see for example Françoise Dowsett-Lemaire's thorough review in *Bull. Afri. Bird Club* 9: 74–78, 2002). Discrepancies between Chappuis' accompanying booklet and this book are therefore due to the fact that references of vocalisations known to us as having been misidentified have been omitted or placed under the correct species.

As is widely acknowledged, transcribing bird sounds in such a way that they can be unambiguously interpreted by others is almost impossible. Phonetic renditions and verbal descriptions are necessarily highly subjective and open to misinterpretation, but there appears to be no convenient alternative. The user of this book is therefore advised to listen to sound recordings and compare them with the transcriptions, in order to understand the authors' interpretation.

In the transcriptions of vocalisations the following conventions apply:

single vowels are pronounced short (thus *a* as in 'apple', *e* as in 'extra', *i* as in 'it', *u* as in 'full')

ee as in 'see', 'be'

iiii is higher pitched than *eeee*

k as in 'cat' (*c* is not used for the hard 'k' sound)

ch as in 'check'

sh as in 'sheep'

CAPITAL LETTERS indicate that the component in question is considerably louder than the others.

Pauses between notes or syllables are denoted as follows (after Lewington *et al.* 1991):

see-see very short pause

see see normal pause, as in ordinary conversation

see, see longer pause (at least *c.* 1 second)

see...see pause of more than 2 seconds

THE PLATES

All species recorded or claimed from the region are illustrated in colour. Our aim has been to illustrate as many distinct plumages as space would permit. Thus, distinctive male, female and immature plumages are depicted, subject to the availability of representative specimens or personal field notes. This is also the case with races that are sufficiently distinctive to be separated in the field. Only in a few cases, however, has the juvenile plumage of passerines been illustrated, as this appears unnecessary and potentially confusing. Indeed, this plumage is usually acquired for only a short period and identification is normally facilitated by the presence of the parents.

Wherever possible or desirable, care has been taken to respect family groupings—this has resulted in some plates containing more illustrations than others. On each plate, the species are arranged in order of resemblance. The order of the plates generally follows taxonomic sequence. Species and distinctive subspecies that occur exclusively on Cape Verde and the Gulf of Guinea islands are grouped on the final four plates (145–148).

The majority of the plates are those of *BOWA* (2001), but ten are entirely new and a significant number have been amended.

THE MAPS

Distribution maps are provided for all species except those occurring exclusively in the Cape Verde and Gulf of Guinea islands. They are placed (generally alternately) either immediately after or immediately before each double-page spread of plate and caption text. The maps are based on published data up to March 2004. A few unpublished records have been included, when considered reliable. The maps reflect the known or inferred distribution of a species in areas of suitable habitat within a broadly defined range. As locality data remain scant for many species in our region, the maps should not necessarily be taken as providing a true reflection of actual distributions and must therefore be used with caution and common sense. Some records from Mali and Mauritania (Lamarche 1980–1981, 1988), included in the distribution maps in *BOWA* (2001), appear to be either erroneous or highly unlikely and have been omitted or indicated with a ‘?’.

Key to the maps:

 resident	 mainly resident but partially migratory or erratic within range	 breeding visitor (intra-African migrant)
 non-breeding visitor (main range)	 non-breeding visitor (sparse occurrence)	X vagrant or isolated record

AUTHORS' NOTE

Many interesting observations remain buried in personal notebooks or unpublished reports. It is therefore recommended that relevant data be documented and submitted to a refereed journal for publication, e.g. *Malimbus* or *Bulletin of the African Bird Club* (see page 24).

In a work of this scope some errors and omissions appear inevitable, despite the care with which museum specimens were examined and data collected. Future fieldwork will also certainly add to our knowledge of the region's avifauna. The authors (c/o the publishers, Christopher Helm) would therefore be pleased to receive any information which updates and corrects that presented in this book.