Some observations of the birds of the Luki Forest, Parc marin des mangroves and Boma, Bas-Congo Province, Democratic Republic of the Congo

by H.D. Sandy AYER[1], Pierre MAVUEMBA[2], David O. MATSON[3] & Martin BOWMAN[4]

[1]115 Strandell Cres. SW, Calgary, Alberta T3H 1K8, Canada <sayer@ambrose.edu>
[2]Institut Supérieur de Navigation et de Pêche,
B.P. 54 Muanda 1, Bas-Congo, République Démocratique du Congo
[3] Eastern Shore Health Department, Virginia Department of Health,
23191 Front Street, Accomac, VA 23301, U.S.A.
[4]19974 Cedar Grove Road, RR#2, Williamstown, Ontario K0C 2J0, Canada

Received 26 March 2013; revised 4 February 2014.

Summary

We present the results of our observations from 2010 to 2013 at three locations in Bas-Congo province, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC): Boma, the Luki Forest Reserve, and Parc marin des mangroves near Muanda. We provide new information on the range and breeding status of several species. We include two first records for the DRC (Blackcap Illadopsis *Illadopsis cleaveri* and Western Reef Egret *Egretta gularis*), a first definite breeding record for the country (Spotted Thick-knee *Burhinus capensis*). We also provide a preliminary list of the birds of the Luki Forest Reserve.

Résumé

Quelques observations d'oiseaux de la Forêt de Luki, du Parc marin des mangroves et de Boma, Province du Bas-Congo, République Démocratique du Congo. Nous présentons les résultats de nos observations de 2010 à 2013 en trois endroits de la province du Bas-Congo, République Démocratique du Congo (RDC): Boma, la Réserve de la Forêt de Luki et le Parc marin des mangroves près de Muanda. Nous apportons de nouvelles informations sur l'aire de répartition et le statut de reproduction de plusieurs espèces. Elles incluent les premières observations en RDC de l'Akalat à tête noire *Illadopsis cleaveri* et de l'Aigrette des récifs occidentale *Egretta gularis* et la première observation précise de reproduction pour le pays de l'Oedicnème tachard *Burhinus capensis*. Nous fournissons aussi une liste préliminaire des oiseaux de la Réserve de la Forêt de Luki.

Introduction

The birds of Bas-Congo province, DRC, are poorly known (Ayer 2011). HDSA, DOM and MB spent 22 June to 4 July 2011 observing and sound-recording birds at three locations in Bas-Congo: Boma (5°50′S, 13°3′E, 22–23 and 27–28 June); the Luki Forest Reserve (5°35′S, 13°10′E, 24–26 June); and several locations in the Parc marin des mangroves (5°55′S, 12°24′E, hereafter Parc marin) near Muanda (29 June to 4 July). PM hosted the group during their stay in Muanda and participated in the fieldwork, along with T.M. Nsankete (TMN). PM also contributed four observations and two breeding records from his own research in the Muanda area and, together with HDSA, three observations made 3–8 Oct 2013 in Parc marin. M. Sthreshley (MS; pers. comm) contributed a nesting record from Kinshasa. All but one of the sound recordings have been verified by R. Demey (RD; pers. comm.).

We present a preliminary list of the birds of the Luki Forest, and our combined observations from there and the other sites in Bas-Congo include two first records for the country (Blackcap Illadopsis *Illadopsis cleaveri* and Western Reef Egret *Egretta gularis*) and one new breeding record (Spotted Thick-knee *Burhinus capensis*). They also provide new information on the distribution and breeding status of several species. Sequence and nomenclature follow Borrow & Demey (2001).

Preliminary list of the birds of Luki Forest Reserve

The Luki Forest Reserve lies *c*. 30 km north of Boma. It comprises mostly lowland forest and forms part of the Mayombe forest block. Habitats include gallery forest, secondary forest, wooded savanna, secondary bush and areas with vegetable farming. Detailed information on the birds of Luki Forest Reserve is lacking, despite its having been designated an Important Bird Area, but it may be expected to contain a substantial element of the Mayombe avifauna (Demey & Louette 2001).

The list below results from three days' (24–26 June 2011) research by HDSA, MB, and DOM and must thus be regarded as preliminary. The 88 species identified include 52 of the 136 mentioned in the list of species "thought likely to occur" at the site by Demey & Louette (2001); our remaining 36 species include three Guinea-Congo Forest biome-restricted species not included in their list. BR signifies species restricted to this biome and listed by Demey & Louette (2001); BR* = Guinea-Congo Forest species not listed by Demey & Louette (2001). HSR = heard only, sound-recorded.

Accipitridae
Buteo auguralis Red-necked Buzzard.
Spizaetus africanus Cassin's Hawk Eagle. BR.

Columbidae
Treron calvus African Green Pigeon.
Turtur afer Blue-spotted Wood Dove.
Columba iriditorques Western Bronze-naped Pigeon. BR, HSR, verified by RD, further details given below.
Streptopelia semitorquata Red-eyed Dove.
Psittacidae
Psittacus erithacus Grey Parrot. BR.
Poicephalus gulielmi Red-fronted Parrot.
Musophagidae
Corythaeola cristata Great Blue Turaco.
Tauraco macrorhynchus Yellow-billed Turaco. BR.
T. persa Green Turaco. BR.
Cuculidae
Centropus monachus Blue-headed Coucal.
Strigidae
Strix woodfordii African Wood Owl.
Caprimulgidae
Caprimulgus fossii Square-tailed Nightjar.
Apodidae
Neafrapus cassini Cassin's Spinetail. BR. Further details given below.
Cypsiurus parvus African Palm Swift.
Apus affinis Little Swift.
Alcedinidae
Alcedo quadribrachys Shining-blue Kingfisher.
Bucerotidae
Tockus camurus Red-billed Dwarf Hornbill. BR.
T. fasciatus African Pied Hornbill. BR.
Bycanistes fistulator Piping Hornbill. BR.
Capitonidae
Gymnobucco peli Bristle-nosed Barbet. BR.
G. calvus Naked-faced Barbet. BR. Further details given below.
Pogoniulus scolopaceus Speckled Tinkerbird. BR.
P. atroflavus Red-rumped Tinkerbird. BR, HSR, verified by RD.
P. bilineatus Yellow-rumped Tinkerbird.
Trachyphonus purpuratus Yellow-billed Barbet. BR.
Lybius bidentatus Double-toothed Barbet.
Indicatoridae
Melichneutes robustus Lyre-tailed Honeyguide. BR, HSR, verified by RD.
Picidae
Sasia africana African Piculet. BR*.
Dendropicos goertae Grey Woodpecker.

Hirundinidae
Psalidoprocne nitens Square-tailed Saw-wing. BR.
Hirundo abyssinica Lesser Striped Swallow.
Pycnonotidae
Andropadus virens Little Greenbul. HSR, verified by RD.
A. gracilis Little Grey Greenbul. BR.
A. ansorgei Ansorge's Greenbul. BR, HSR, verified by RD.
A. curvirostris Plain Greenbul. BR.
A. gracilirostris Slender-billed Greenbul. HSR, verified by RD.
A. latirostris Yellow-whiskered Greenbul.
Ixonotus guttatus Spotted Greenbul. BR.
Thescelocichla leucopleura Swamp Palm Bulbul. BR.
Phyllastrephus icterinus Icterine Greenbul. BR.
Bleda notatus Lesser Bristlebill. BR, HSR, verified by RD.
Pycnonotus barbatus Common Bulbul.
Nicator chloris Western Nicator. BR.
Turdidae
Zoothera camaronensis Black-eared Ground Thrush. BR*, further details given below.
Alethe diademata Fire-crested Alethe. BR, HSR, verified by RD.
A. poliocephala Brown-chested Alethe. HSR, identified using Chappuis (2000), further details given below.
Stizorhina fraseri Rufous Flycatcher-Thrush. BR, HSR, verified by RD.
Sylviidae
Eremomela badiceps Rufous-crowned Eremomela. BR.
Sylvietta virens Green Crombec. BR.
Macrosphenus concolor Grey Longbill. BR, HSR, verified by RD, further details below.
Hylia prasina Green Hylia. BR.
Cisticola anonymus Chattering Cisticola. BR.
Prinia subflava Tawny-flanked Prinia.
Apalis rufogularis Buff-throated Apalis. BR.
Muscicapidae
Fraseria ocreata Fraser's Forest Flycatcher. BR.
Muscicapa epulata Little Grey Flycatcher. BR.
M. infuscata Sooty Flycatcher. BR.
Monarchidae
Erythrocercus mccallii Chestnut-capped Flycatcher. BR.
Trochocercus nitens Blue-headed Crested Flycatcher. BR, HSR, verified by RD.
Terpsiphone viridis African Paradise Flycatcher.
Platysteiridae
Dyaphorophyia castanea Chestnut Wattle-eye. BR.
Timaliidae
Illadopsis fulvescens Brown Illadopsis. BR, HSR, verified by RD.

I. cleaveri Blackcap Illadopsis. BR*, seen and sound-recorded, verified by RD, further details given below.
Remizidae
Pholidornis rushiae Tit-hylia. BR, further details given below.
Nectariniidae
Anthreptes seimundi Little Green Sunbird. BR.
Cyanomitra cyanolaema Blue-throated Brown Sunbird. BR.
C. obscura Western Olive Sunbird.
Chalcomitra rubescens Green-throated Sunbird. BR.
Hedydipna collaris Collared Sunbird.
Cinnyris minullus Tiny Sunbird. BR.
C. venustus Variable Sunbird.
C. superbus Superb Sunbird. BR.
Zosteropidae
Zosterops senegalensis Yellow White-eye. Further details given below.
Malaconotidae
Dryoscopus senegalensis Red-eyed Puffback. BR.
D. gambensis Northern Puffback.
Laniarius leucorhynchus Sooty Boubou. BR.
Oriolidae
Oriolus brachyrhynchus Western Black-headed Oriole. BR.
Dicruridae
Dicrurus modestus Velvet-mantled Drongo.
Sturnidae
Lamprotornis splendidus Splendid Glossy Starling.
Passeridae
Passer griseus Northern Grey-headed Sparrow.
Ploceidae
Malimbus malimbicus Crested Malimbe. BR.
Ploceus cucullatus Village Weaver.
P. tricolor Yellow-mantled Weaver. BR, further details given below.
Estrildidae
Nigrita luteifrons Pale-fronted Negrofinch. BR.
N. canicapillus Grey-headed Negrofinch.
Lonchura bicolor Black-and-White Mannikin.

New distributional or breeding records from Bas-Congo

***Egretta gularis* Western Reef Egret.** For about 20 min. on the afternoon of 9 May 2012, PM and Z.L. Sambiandi observed two individuals (one dark morph, one white morph) in the company of a single African Spoonbill *Platalea alba* at Ngoyo Lagoon,

Parc marin. Both observers noted the white primary patches on the otherwise grey-plumaged dark morph individual. The dark morph can be confused with the very rare dark morph Little Egret *E. garzetta* (Borrow & Demey 2001), but there is some doubt as to whether the latter actually exists and, in any event, white primary patches are diagnostic for *E. gularis* (R. Demey pers. comm.). As for the white morph individual, PM initially thought it to be *E. garzetta* but noticed that there was yellow on the bill and that the yellow on the feet extended up the leg. *E. gularis* does not appear in Lippens & Wille (1976), and this species was thought to occur only as far south as the Ogooué delta in Gabon and the Gulf of Guinea islands (Christy 2001, Jones & Tye 2006), but it has been recorded recently on the west coast of South Africa (Hockey *et al.* 2005), so its occurrence in the DRC is not unexpected.

***Platalea alba* African Spoonbill.** PM observed an individual on 15 Feb 2010 at Ngoyo Lagoon, *c*. 150 m west of the Atlantic Ocean in Parc marin. At the same location on 15 Nov 2011, he saw a flock of *c*. 10 birds in breeding plumage. He also observed individuals on 11 and 23 Mar 2012, and 9 May 2012 (photographed). The last individual was in the company of two *Egretta gularis*. At c. 10h00 on 3 Oct 2013, HDSA and PM also observed an individual at this location. *P. alba* is widespread but has a patchy distribution (Brown *et al.* 1982). Lippens & Wille (1976) believed it to be present only in eastern DRC, but Chapin (1932) mentioned a record from Stanley Pool and thought it possible in Bas-Congo. A specimen now in the the Royal Museum of Central Africa, Tervuren, Belgium (RMCA) was collected at Banana (6°1′S, 12°25′E), Bas-Congo, in 1953 (Schouteden 1948–60). *P. alba* is considered a resident in Congo Brazzaville (Borrow & Demey 2001), and a resident breeder in Angola (Dean 2000) and small flocks were observed at Soyo (6°7′S, 12°21′E), *c*. 40 km south of Muanda, in May and October 2006 (Dean & Le Maitre 2008).

***Dendrocygna bicolor* Fulvous Whistling Duck.** HDSA and MB observed an individual at *c*. 10h00 on 4 Jul near Tshiende by the Kongo village road in Parc marin. The bird was uniformly light brown, had a grey bill and a thin, erect neck, and was swimming on a pond that had dense patches of reeds and a heavily vegetated shore. The species is subject to irregular movements (Borrow & Demey 2001), and Brown *et al.* (1982) considered it to be accidental on the coast of West Africa. Only two previous records are known for Bas-Congo: a flock of *c*. 40 at Mateba Island, Parc marin, 28 Apr 1954, from which I. Mesmaekers obtained two specimens (Herroelen 2005) that are now at the RMCA (M. Louette pers. comm.); and ten individuals observed at various locations within Parc marin from 23 Jan to 30 Jan 2006 (T. Dodman, pers. comm.). The species is otherwise known only from the northeastern, eastern, and southeastern DRC, where it breeds (Herroelen 2005). However, Chapin (1932) mentions a record from Cacongo (5°13′S, 12°3′E), Cabinda, and the species was considered an uncommon resident in the main part of Angola (Dean 2000). It has not yet been recorded in Congo Brazzaville (Borrow & Demey 2001).

***Melierax metabates* Dark Chanting Goshawk.** At *c*. 10h00 on 2 Jul, all four of the authors had telescope views at *c*. 400 m of an individual perched in a dead tree at the

edge of the cultivated fields of Luvula Savanna, Parc marin. It had uniformly grey plumage and red legs and cere. *M. metabates* can only be confused with Pale Chanting Goshawk *M. canorus*, which inhabits much drier habitat (W.R.J. Dean, pers. comm.). Lippens & Wille (1976) considered southern Kwilu (*c*. 500 km east of Parc marin) to be the western limit of the range of *M. metabates* in the DRC, but Chapin (1932) mentioned an unconfirmed report from Bas-Congo, and the RMCA has a specimen from Banana (Schouteden 1948–60). The species is resident in Congo Brazzaville (Borrow & Demey 2001) but has not been recorded in similar habitat in the Kouilou Basin, *c.* 150 km north of the parts of Bas-Congo we visited (Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett 1991). The closest Angolan records are from Uige town (7°35′S, 15°0′E), *c*. 300 km southwest of Muanda (Dean 2000).

***Aquila wahlbergi* Wahlberg's Eagle.** At *c*. 10h00 on 4 Jul, HDSA, MB, DOM, and TMN observed a dark-morph individual soaring at *c*. 100 m near Tshiende by the Kongo village road in Parc marin. See Ayer (2011) for a 2009 record from Boma and for the species' previously-known distribution in the DRC.

***Falco tinnunculus* Common Kestrel.** At *c*. 17h00 on 21 Dec 2012, PM observed three individuals, one of which, a female, he photographed while it was perched in a tree bordering grassland near the Muanda airport. All three were present for several days thereafter, and at *c*. 17h00 on 7 Jan 2013, a juvenile (apparently one of the three) was observed perched with the female. They were especially active between 15h00 and 18h00. All were likely *F. t. rufescens*, because one of the photographs of the female shows heavy barring above and bold streaking below (*cf*. the description in Brown *et al.* 1982). Louette (1989) mentioned an RMCA specimen of *F. t. rufescens* collected at Boma in 1939. Brown *et al.* (1982) reported *F. t. rufescens* as a common resident from Upper Guinea to northern Angola, with *F. t. rupicolus* replacing it farther south, Dean (2000) made no mention of *F. t. rufescens* in Angola and considered *F. t. rupicolus* to be the common (breeding) subspecies there, it being rare in Cabinda. *F. t. tinnunculus* occurs as a Palaearctic migrant in northern DRC as far west as Kinshasa (4°18′S, 15°18′E), Oct–Mar (Lippens & Wille 1976).

***Burhinus capensis* Spotted Thick-knee.** PM observed this species regularly from 24 May 2010 to 28 Feb 2013 in sandy brush *c*. 200 m north of Ngoyo Lagoon. *B. capensis* is the only thick-knee with no wing bar at rest or in flight (Urban *et al*. 1986), and photographs of adults taken by PM on 2 Feb 2011 show no wing bar. He also saw Water Thick-knees *B. vermiculatus* at the site on 12 Jan 2012, but they were closer to the edge of the lagoon. HDSA, MB, DOM and TMN observed an adult *B. capensis* at the first site for about 5 min. on 30 Jun 2011. By 11 Dec 2011, the number of individuals at the Ngoyo site had increased to five. Adults were also present on 18 Aug 2012. PM has also seen adults in Matamba, a sandy, dry, brushy plateau in Parc marin about 25 km east of Muanda, and in nearby Makanzi and Malemba. More recently, PM, HDSA and ZLS observed two individuals in dry grassland near Muada-Village, Parc marin, at *c*. 14h00 on 3 Oct 2013; and on three occasions between 3 and 8 Oct 2013 they observed an individual at the edge of a cassava field *c*. 300 m east of

Ngoyo Lagoon. PM observed eggs and young at the Ngoyo site in Mar, Jun, and Sept 2010. He also captured and photographed a fledgling there on 25 Oct 2010 and observed young on 19 Apr 2012. Chapin (1939) mentioned a specimen from Bas-Congo, and the RMCA has three, including one from Boma and one from Banana (Schouteden 1948–60). *B. capensis* is otherwise confined to southeastern DRC (Lippens & Wille 1976). In 2006, a pair of individuals was seen in dry grassland southwest of Soyo, Angola, *c*. 40 km south of Muanda (Dean & Le Maitre 2008). PM's observations represent the fourth record for Bas-Congo and the first definite breeding record for the DRC (Chapin 1939 mentions eggs, but without saying whether they were from Congo or not).

Columba iriditorques **Western Bronze-naped Pigeon.** Heard in the canopy in the Luki Forest < 5 km from the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) Centre, 24 and 26 Jun, by SA, MB, DOM; sound-recorded by DOM on one of those dates. There is some uncertainty as to the species' range in the DRC: Urban *et al.* (1986) put it from Bandundu east, but the range map in Lippens & Wille (1976) includes Bas-Congo, and Chapin (1939) mentioned hearing the species at Nganda Sundi (4°52′S, 12°52′E) near the border with Cabinda. The only Bas-Congo specimen was taken at Kisantu (4°36′S, 15°6′E) (Schouteden 1948–60). The nearest record from Congo Brazzaville is from the Kouilou Basin (R.J. Dowsett, pers. comm.); the nearest Angola records are from Uige province, which borders eastern Bas-Congo.

Turtur chalcospilos **Emerald-spotted Wood Dove.** At *c*. 16h30 on 3 Jul, at Kifuku, Parc marin, PM observed a wood dove from about 10 m. It had shiny green wing spots and was foraging in a cassava field in gallery forest bordering savanna. The bird flew away before HDSA, MB, DOM or TMN could see it, but we played Chappuis' recording of *T. chalcospilos* and received a matching response from the spot in the nearby forest into which the bird had flown. Lippens & Wille (1976) indicated that the species was only known from eastern DRC, but Chapin (1939) believed that it should be expected in Bas-Congo, and the RMCA has seven specimens (1936–54) from there (Schouteden 1948–60). In Congo Brazzaville, *T. chalcospilos* is a rare resident of littoral savanna (Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett 1991). It is common at Soyo, Angola (Dean & Le Maitre 2008) and probably more common in Bas-Congo than originally thought.

Caprimulgus fossii **Square-tailed Nightjar.** On 17 Oct 2011, PM photographed two eggs on the ground in brush bordering sandy, semi-arid, grassy scrub on his property near Ngoyo Lagoon, Parc marin. On 30 Jun, HDSA, MB, DOM, PM and TMN had telescope views at *c*. 15 m of an individual at rest near the same location. *C. fossii* is common in the DRC and breeds throughout the country (Lippens & Wille 1976). Chapin (1939) gave Sep–Nov as the breeding season in Bas-Congo.

Neafrapus cassini **Cassin's Spinetail.** At *c*. 13h00 on 26 Jun, within 5 km of the WWF centre in the Luki Forest, HDSA, MB and DOM saw a flock of *c*.15 spinetails at a distance of *c*. 200–300 m, foraging above the rainforest canopy. Some individuals were approximately the size of Little Swift *Apus affinis* but had field marks characteristic of *N. cassini,* namely, white bellies and undertail coverts and mostly

dark rumps. In the DRC, *N. cassini* is locally common in the north, from the Mbandaka area to the Ituri Forest, and in the east (http://www.pesic-pedersen.com/drc/checklists.html, consulted 18 Jan 2014). However, Chapin (1939) once saw a flock of four at Nganda Sundi, Bas-Congo. In Congo-Brazzaville the species is common in littoral and Mayombe forest (Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett 1991). It is uncommon, but presumed resident, in primary and secondary Guinea forest in Cabinda (Dean 2000).

***Halcyon leucocephala* Grey-headed Kingfisher.** In the early afternoon of 2 Jul, in a clearing at Yakululu Forest, Parc marin, HDSA, MB, DOM, PM and TMN had telescope views at < 50 m for *c*. 2 min. of an individual perched on a dead branch. All five observers saw the diagnostic chestnut belly. According to Lippens & Wille (1976), this species is not found in Bas-Congo. However, the RMCA has a specimen from Kisantu (Schouteden 1948–60) and Dean (2000) mentions one from Cabinda.

***Gymnobucco calvus* Naked-faced Barbet.** At *c*. 17h00 on 24 Jun, HDSA, MB and DOM observed a flock of nine from the Luki Forest entry road, *c*. 300 m north of the WWF centre. The birds were dull grey-brown overall and had black faces with tufts under the lower mandible. One adult in the group was feeding a nestling at one of the many nest holes in a dead tree. *G. calvus* is common in Bas-Congo and two males in breeding condition were collected near Mbanza-Ngungu (5°15′S, 14°52′E), Bas-Congo, in 1914 (Chapin 1939). Fry *et al.* (1988) mentioned DRC breeding records (mostly of parents feeding young) for ssp. *congicus* (found in western DRC, western Congo Brazzaville and northwestern Angola) in Apr, Oct and Dec. Dean (2000) mentioned Angolan breeding records from Mar. Our observation is apparently the first dry season breeding record for the DRC.

***Zoothera camaronensis* Black-eared Ground Thrush**. At *c*. 9h00 on 25 Jun, HDSA, MB and DOM saw an individual of this species from above, on a steep hillside in dense rainforest, just off a well-used trail < 1 km from the WWF centre in the Luki Forest. HDSA saw it briefly in profile, facing left, perched on an exposed branch *c*. 60 cm above ground level, from < 10 m and noted the two vertical black bars on the face and the thick-centred bill with lower mandible shorter than the upper: *cf.* the illustration of *Z.* (then *Geokichla*) *princei* in Chapin (1953), which captures the bill shape better than recent field guides do. DOM, who saw the bird perched but could not see the head because of an obstructing branch, noted the thrush-like shape, the orange cast to the flanks and underparts, and the white on the wing. He and MB also saw the bird in flight and observed the same three characteristics. The song of *Z. camaronensis* is unknown, but Chappuis (2000) recorded the call. DOM had played this recording repeatedly for *c*. 10 min. prior to the bird's appearance on the perch. During this time, on several occasions, he heard, but was unable to record, a response that was identical to the call on Chappuis' recording. *Z. camaronensis* is a rare bird of lowland forests of central Africa that is shy and difficult to see. It is spottily distributed in western Cameroon, northeastern Gabon, northeastern DRC, and western Uganda (Keith *et al.* 1991). A *Zoothera* individual was seen at Koubotchi (4°19′S,

11°45′E) in the Kouilou district of Congo Brazzaville (Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett 1991), about 250 km northwest of Luki. Our sighting represents the most southerly observation of this species.

***Alethe poliocephala* Brown-chested Alethe.** At *c*. 9h00 on both 25 and 26 Jun, HDSA, MB and DOM heard this species in the Luki Forest < 5 km from the WWF centre; our identification is based on a comparison of our recorded vocalization with that of Chappuis (2000). Our encounter of 25 Jun occurred at the location where we saw *Zoothera camaronensis* and *Illadopsis cleaveri*; that of 26 Jun occurred near an ant swarm. We also sound-recorded *Alethe diademata* on the latter occasion. *A. poliocephala* was thought to be restricted to eastern DRC (Chapin 1953, Lippens & Wille 1976) but Chapin (1953) expected it to be found in Bas-Congo, because of records in north-western Angola. Although the closest Angola record is from Cuanza Norte province, 350 km south of the Congo River (Dean 2000), the species is locally common in the Mayombe forest of Congo Brazzaville (Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett 1991).

***Macrosphenus concolor* Grey Longbill.** On 24, 25 and 26 Jun HDSA, MB and DOM heard this species in the Luki Forest within 5 km of the WWF centre. DOM also sound-recorded it at least three times during this period. HDSA, MB, DOM and PM also heard and saw this species on 2 Jul in Yukululu Forest, Parc marin, where DOM again recorded it. The western limit of this species in the DRC was thought to be Kinshasa (Chapin 1953, Lippens & Wille 1976). *M. concolor* is a common resident of forest in the Mayombe of Congo Brazzaville (Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett 1991) and so is not unexpected in Bas-Congo. The closest Angola records are from Lunda Norte, *c*. 400 km southeast of the Luki Forest (Pinto 1973).

***Cisticola chiniana* Rattling Cisticola.** Sometime between 9h00 and 12h00 on 28 Jun, DOM recorded this species' song (which HDSA and MB also heard) along a communications tower maintenance road *c*. 1 km east of Kikuku village near FACTEB Seminary, Boma. The bird was singing in open, hilly savanna that includes ravines with patches of gallery forest and extensive brush. RD made the initial identification, which we verified by comparing our recording with Chappuis's (2000) of both *C. chiniana* and the similar-sounding Bubbling Cisticola *C. bulliens*, which inhabits similar habitat. The song we recorded matched Chappuis's recording of *C. chiniana*; it was drier sounding and more staccato in tone than Chappuis's recording of *C. bulliens*. *C. chiniana* was known previously only from Kinshasa eastwards (Chapin 1953, Lippens & Wille 1976). It is resident in Congo Brazzaville (Borrow & Demey 2001). The nearest Angola record is from Lunda Norte, *c*. 400 km southeast of Boma (Dean 2000).

***Illadopsis cleaveri* Blackcap Illadopsis.** At *c*. 9h00 on 25 Jun, HDSA, MB and DOM had clear views from < 10m of an individual at the edge of dense forest on a steep hillside < 1 km from the WWF centre in the Luki Forest. The bird flew from the understorey and perched on a branch *c*. 60 cm above ground, and faced to the left. A *Zoothera camaronensis* had used the same perch *c*. 30 min. prior to this sighting. All three observers were above the bird. The black cap, dark cheek patch, and pale

underparts were clearly visible. DOM recorded the song. Chapin (1953) mentioned an unverified Bas-Congo specimen but the species is not mentioned in Lippens & Wille (1976), and Fry & Keith (2004) mention no records south of Congo Brazzaville. Our sighting is therefore the first definite DRC record and the most southerly record to date. In Congo Brazzaville, it is a common forest resident (Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett 1991), so its presence in Bas-Congo is not unexpected.

***Pholidornis rushiae* Tit-Hylia.** In the late afternoon of 25 Jun, HDSA, MB, and DOM observed a warbler with yellow rump and belly, and fine dusky streaking on the grey head and breast, in the canopy of the Luki Forest, *c*. 2 km. from the WWF centre. These characteristics make this tiny warbler unmistakable (Urban *et al.*1997, Sinclair & Ryan 2010). Prior DRC records are from southern Bandundu and farther east (Urban *et al.*1997), although the species should occur sporadically throughout the equatorial forest (Lippens & Wille 1976) and in the Mayombe, in particular, given that a specimen was taken in Cuanza Norte province, Angola, *c*. 350 km to the south (Chapin 1954), and that it is known from the Mayombe of Congo Brazzaville (Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett 1991).

***Zosterops senegalensis* Yellow White-eye.** At *c*. 10h00 on 24 Jun, HDSA, MB and DOM observed an individual in the Luki Forest, *c*. 2 km from the WWF centre, in rainforest at the edge of a hillside cassava field. This species is the only white-eye in West Africa (Urban *et al.*1997) and was stated by Chapin (1954) to be found in the DRC only from southern Bandundu eastwards, but the RMCA has two specimens from Bas Congo, collected in 1922 (Schouteden 1948–60). The species is resident in Congo Brazzaville (Borrow & Demey 2001) but was not recorded in the Mayombe there by Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett (1991). The closest Angola record is from Uige province, > 300 km south of the Luki Forest.

***Cinnyris johannae* Johanna's Sunbird.** PM observed this species in Nsitu Mvenya forest, 35–37 km north of Muanda on the road to Boma, on 1 Jan 2010, and near Ngoyo Lagoon in Parc marin on 3 Mar 2012. On both occasions he observed the brilliant green head and throat of the male and the yellow, heavily-streaked underparts of the female. HDSA, MB, DOM and PM observed a male of what may have been this species at *c*. 17h00 on 1 Jul. The bird was perched atop a 6 m tree in cassava fields *c*. 1 km from gallery forest near Bududu, Parc marin. It resembled Superb Sunbird *C. superbus*, which we had seen on 25 and 30 Jun, but the head and throat were entirely metallic green. We examined the head for > 30 s from *c*. 25 m. At *c*. 12h00 on 3 Oct, HDSA and PM observed a female perched on top of a dead tree near a large pond by the Kongo Village road near Tshiende in Parc marin. The closest DRC records are from Bandundu (map in Cheke & Mann 2001). *C. johannae* is to be expected in the DRC Mayombe forest, given its presence in Cabinda, where it is uncommon (Chapin 1954, Dean 2000), and records from the Mayombe of Congo Brazzaville, where it is rare (Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett 1991).

***Dryoscopus cubla* Black-backed Puffback.** On 28 Jun, HDSA and DOM had clear telescope views at < 100 m of a female of this species in dense brush in savanna

< 1 km east of the village of Kikuku near FACTEB Seminary, Boma. The bird perched in a tree in response to the playing of a recording on Chappuis (2000). HDSA and DOM noted the pale supercilium (not present in Northern Puffback *D. gambensis*), white flanks, black cap and back, and black wings edged white (unlike in Black-shouldered Puffback *D. senegalensis*). The western limit of the range of *D. cubla* was thought to be the Kwango River (Lippens & Wille 1976), part of which forms the boundary between Bandundu and Bas-Congo. It has not yet been recorded in Congo Brazzaville (Urban *et al.* 1997) and the closest Angola records are from Cuanza Norte (Dean 2000), *c*. 250 km south of Boma. It is thought not to overlap with *D. senegalensis* (Urban *et al.* 1997), which HDSA, MB and DOM encountered on 26 Jun in the Luki Forest, *c*. 30 km northwest of Boma.

Lamprotornis nitens **Cape Glossy Starling.** At *c*. 9h00 on 4 Jul, HDSA, MB, DOM and TMN had telescope views at *c*. 150 m, for *c*. 2 min., of a pair perched on a dead tree in gallery forest in savanna near Bududu, Parc marin. The birds were *c*. 25 cm in length, had uniformly glossy blue-green plumage, yellow eye, rounded head, and red shoulder patches. The two previous records for the DRC are from Bas-Congo (Ayer 2011). In Soyo, Angola, *c*. 40 km to the south, Dean saw this species on four of eight days in May 2006, and every day from 17–24 Oct 2006 (Dean & Le Maitre 2008).

Passer domesticus **House Sparrow.** HDSA, MB and DOM saw this species on three occasions: at a toll booth (5°49′S, 13°28′E) *c*. 30 km east of Matadi, 21 Jun; in downtown Boma near the post office, with Northern Grey-headed Sparrows *P. griseus*, 28 Jun; at the ABC Junior Motel, Muanda, 1 Jul. The species probably has established populations in all three cities. For previous Bas-Congo sightings, see Ayer (2011).

Ploceus tricolor **Yellow-mantled Weaver.** In the Luki Forest *c*. 2 km from the WWF centre, HDSA and DOM saw an individual of this species just below the forest canopy, 25 Jun, and HDSA, MB and DOM saw another *c*. 1 m above eye-level in dense forest, at *c*. 13h00 on 26 Jun. Both birds were in mixed flocks. On both occasions the birds' yellow mantle contrasted sharply with the black head and back. Lippens & Wille (1976) mention records from the eastern DRC only, although Chapin (1954) believed it should occur in Bas-Congo because of records from Cabinda (see Dean 2000). The species has also been recorded in the Kouilou basin of Congo-Brazzaville, just north of Cabinda (Fry & Keith 2004).

Pyrenestes ostrinus **Black-bellied Seedcracker.** Over 2–3 weeks in Feb 2011, MS observed a pair of this species repeatedly visiting a *Dracaena fragrans* bush on the campus of the American School of Kinshasa (4°18′S, 15°18′E). When they stopped visiting the bush, he examined it and found a nest constructed entirely of bamboo leaves, with a more tightly constructed inner pocket comprised of small twigs. It contained the remnants of what appeared to be one light blue egg with brown speckling. The complete egg would probably have been *c*. 1.5 cm. in length.

[***Uraeginthus bengalus*** **Red-cheeked Cordon-bleu.** At *c*. 11h00 on 22 Jun, MB observed a flock of about ten cordon-bleus on a communications tower maintenance road 500 m north of Kikuku village near the FACTEB campus, Boma. At least two,

though not all, had identical conspicuous red cheek-patches. HDSA, MB and DOM later saw flocks of Southern Cordon-bleu *U. angolensis* at the same location. PM has seen birds matching *U. bengalus* in reeds on the Muanda-Boma road, where *U. angolensis* also occurs; and DOM has seen *U. bengalus* on six occasions between Jul 2009 and Jul 2010 in Kinshasa, where *U. angolensis* is common. However, DOM's observations may have concerned escaped cage birds, because *U. angolensis* is kept as a cage bird in nearby Brazzaville (R. Dowsett pers. comm.). Previous DRC records of *U. bengalus* have been mostly from the east and southeast (Chapin 1954, Fry & Keith 2004), although Lippens & Wille (1976) mentioned records from the Kinshasa area. Both species have also been recorded in Cabinda (Sharpe & Bouvier 1878, Dean 2000). Sympatric populations of the two species occur in Kasai and Katanga provinces, where no evidence of hybrids has been found (Fry & Keith 2004). *U. bengalus* has not yet been recorded in Congo Brazzaville (Fry & Keith 2004). However, in areas of allopatry in southwest Zambia and northern South Africa, Kelsey & Barnard (1988) mist-netted three *U. angolensis* with scarlet feathering on the cheeks, but with the red patches smaller than is typical for *U. bengalus*, and one bird had significantly shorter notch to feather-tip distance of the inner web of the outermost large primary than is typical for *U. bengalus*. Kelsey & Barnard (1988) believed that individual variation, rather than hybridization, best accounts for the existence of the scarlet facial plumage of their birds, and their observation must call into question all sightings of "*U. bengalus*" west of Kasai in the DRC and in Cabinda. However, we suggest that the sightings of MB and PM (and perhaps those of DOM), as well as the Cabinda sightings, were likely of *U. bengalus*, although further research is needed to establish this with certainty. If our contention is confirmed, other studies will be needed to determine the extent of sympatry of *U. bengalus* and *U. angolensis* in Bas-Congo and adjacent areas.**]**

Acknowledgments

HDSA, MB and DOM thank Dr Mabiala Justin-Robert Kenzo, president of the Communauté Évangélique de l'Alliance au Congo for his hospitality and logistical assistance, and for his intervention that led to an audience with local representatives of the WWF. Laurent Nsenga of the WWF granted us permission to stay at the WWF centre in the Luki Forest and to conduct research in the Forest. His helpful staff arranged for our transportation to and from the site, and Tsimba Léon Sembal served as our guide. René and Cecelia Holvast, missionaries with the Christian and Missionary Alliance, housed and fed us during our stay in Boma and lent us their car and driver. Michael Sthreshley took us on a birding tour of the forested grounds of The American School of Kinshasa and contributed a record from there. Cindy Dunn hosted us at the Methodist-Presbyterian Hostel (MPH) in Kinshasa and provided valuable logistical assistance. Dr Léon Mubikayi lent us his car and driver and

oversaw our departures from Kinshasa. Pastor Philippe Ngoma transported HDSA from airports to MPH. PM's then chauffeur Kabu drove us to most of the locations in Parc marin, and his subsequent chauffeur Zacharie Lelo Sambiandi drove PM and HDSA to various sites in the Parc in Oct 2013 and was the first to observe many of the birds we saw. We thank Thomas Mfu Nsankete, former biologist at Parc marin, who accompanied us on most of our outings in Muanda. Ornithologists John Bates, David Willard and Josh Engel of the Field Museum, Chicago, gave HDSA advice and access to bird specimens, and library staff Christine Giannoni and Michael Trombley provided access to the collections and inter-library loans. Michel Louette and Reygel Alain provided details of specimens at RMCA. Ron Demey analyzed DOM's sound-recordings and thereby greatly increased the number of species that we were able to identify. He also gave us information on *Egretta gularis*, assisted with the compilation of the Luki Forest bird list, and responded to other questions. R.J. Dowsett and W.R.J. Dean commented on the manuscript and contributed additional bibliography. Aaron Alford (Dept of Biology, Ambrose University College) made valuable comments on the general significance of our findings. Tim Dodman sent us the results of a Wetlands International waterbird survey in Parc marin.

References

AYER, H.D.S. (2011) Some observations of birds and bird behaviour in Kinshasa and Bas-Congo Province, Democratic Republic of the Congo. *Malimbus* 33: 65–77.

BORROW, N. & DEMEY, R. (2001) *A Guide to the Birds of Western Africa*. Princeton University Press, Princeton.

BROWN, L.H., URBAN, E.K. & NEWMAN, K. (eds) (1982) *The Birds of Africa*, vol. 1. Academic Press, London.

CHAPIN, J.P. (1932) The birds of the Belgian Congo. Part 1. *Bull. Am. Mus. Nat. Hist.* 65: 1–756.

CHAPIN, J.P. (1939) The birds of the Belgian Congo. Part 2. *Bull. Am. Mus. Nat. Hist.* 75: 1–632.

CHAPIN, J.P. (1953) The birds of the Belgian Congo. Part 3. *Bull. Am. Mus. Nat. Hist.* 75A: 1–821.

CHAPIN, J.P. (1954) The birds of the Belgian Congo. Part 4. *Bull. Am. Mus. Nat. Hist.* 75B: 1–846.

CHAPPUIS, C. 2000. *Oiseaux d'Afrique (African Bird Sounds), 2 West and Central Africa.* 11 CDs. Société d'Études Ornithologiques de France, Paris.

CHEKE, R.A. & MANN, C.F. (2001) *Sunbirds: A Guide to the Sunbirds, Flowerpeckers, Spiderhunters and Sugarbirds of the World*. Yale University Press, New Haven.

CHRISTY, P. (2001) Gabon. Pp. 349–356 *in* FISHPOOL L.D.C. & EVANS M.I. (eds) *Important Bird Areas in Africa and Associated Islands*. BirdLife International, Cambridge.

DEAN, W.R.J. (2000) *The Birds of Angola: An Annotated Checklist*. British Ornithologists' Union, Tring.

DEAN, W.R.J. & LE MAITRE, D.C. (2008) The birds of the Soyo area, northwest Angola. *Malimbus* 30:1–18.

DEMEY, R. & LOUETTE, M. (2001) Democratic Republic of Congo. Pp. 199–218 in FISHPOOL L.D.C. & EVANS M.I. (eds) *Important Bird Areas in Africa and Associated Islands*. BirdLife International, Cambridge.

DOWSETT-LEMAIRE, F. & DOWSETT, R. J. (1991). The avifauna of the Kouilou Basin in Congo. *Tauraco Res. Rep.* 4: 189–239.

FRY, C.H., KEITH, S., (eds.) (2004). *The Birds of Africa,* vol. 7. Academic Press, London.

FRY, C.H., KEITH, S., & URBAN, E.K. (eds) (1988) *The Birds of Africa,* vol. 3. Academic Press, London.

HERROELEN, P. (2005) Further annotations and an addition to the avifauna of the Democratic Republic of Congo. *Bull. Brit. Orn. Club* 126:19–37.

HOCKEY, P.A.R., DEAN, W.R.J. & RYAN, P.G. (eds) (2005) *Roberts Birds of Southern Africa.* 7th ed., John Voelcker Bird Book Fund, Cape Town.

JONES, P. & TYE, A. (2006) *The Birds of São Tomé & Príncipe with Annobón: islands of the Gulf of Guinea*. British Ornithologists' Union, Oxford.

KEITH, S., URBAN, E.K. & Fry, C.H. (eds) (1991) *The Birds of Africa,* vol. 4. Academic Press, London.

KELSEY, M. & BARNARD, P. (1988) Scarlet facial feathering of *Uraeginthus angolensis*: a phenotypic throwback? *Ibis* 130: 444–445.

LIPPENS, L. & WILLE, H. (1976) *Les Oiseaux du Zaïre.* Lannoo, Tielt.

LOUETTE, M. (1989) Additions and corrections to the avifauna of Zaire (4). *Bull.Brit. Orn. Club* 109: 217–225.

PINTO, A.A. da R. (1973) Aves da coleccião do Museu do Dundo. *Publ. cult. Comp. Diam. Angola* 87: 129–178.

SCHOUTEDEN, H. (1948–60) De Vogels van Belgisch Congo en van Ruanda-Urundi. *Ann. Koninkl. Mus. Belg. Congo*. C Zoologie. 1: 1–200; 2: 201–416; 3: 417–564; 4: 1–176; 5: 177–340; 6: 1–228; 7: 229–524; 8: 1–236; 9: 237–524.

SHARPE R.B. & BOUVIER A. (1878) Etude d'ornithologie africaine. Nouvelle liste d'oiseaux recueillis dans la région du Congo par MM. le Dr. A. Lucan et L. Petit, de septembre 1876 à septembre 1877. *Bull. Soc. Zool. Fr.* 3: 71–80.

SINCLAIR, I. & RYAN, P. (2010) *Birds of Africa South of the Sahara*. 2nd ed., Struik Nature, Cape Town.

URBAN, E.K., FRY, C.H. & KEITH, S. (1986) *The Birds of Africa*, vol. 2. Academic Press, London.

URBAN, E.K., FRY, C.H. & KEITH, S. (eds) (1997) *The Birds of Africa,* vol. 5. Academic Press, London.