

An update on the birds of Atewa Range Forest Reserve, Ghana

Françoise Dowsett-Lemaire & Robert J. Dowsett

A report prepared for the Wildlife Division, Forestry Commission, Accra





Dowsett-Lemaire F. & Dowsett R.J. 2011. An update on the birds of Atewa Range Forest Reserve, Ghana. *Dowsett-Lemaire Misc. Rep.* 74: 13 pp.

***E-mail:* Dowsett@aol.com**

An update on the birds of Atewa Range Forest Reserve, Ghana

by Françoise Dowsett-Lemaire & Robert J. Dowsett

Summary.

With 20 additions since 2005, the avifauna of Atewa Range now consists of 227 species, of which *c.* 150 are restricted to the Guineo-Congolian biome. Some of the more interesting additions are the uncommon Black-collared Lovebird *Agapornis swindernianus*, the rare or little-known Grey Ground Thrush *Zoothera princei* and especially the Nimba Flycatcher *Melaenornis annamarulae*, an Upper Guinea endemic with a very limited distribution at medium altitudes, for which Atewa now represents the eastern limit of range and the only locality in Ghana. Of 10 species of conservation concern occurring at Atewa, some are decreasing (e.g. the large hornbills) and others must be suffering from the degradation of the forest habitat through illegal logging. The forest is meant to be protected as a “Globally Significant Biodiversity Area” but is in fact greatly threatened by the opening of roads for bauxite prospection, the increase of poaching and logging, and the possibility of bauxite exploitation. Atewa forest is also extremely important as a source of water for the capital city of Accra, and this may be what will save it from further exploitation.

INTRODUCTION

We first visited Atewa Range Forest Reserve on 4-10 February 2005, operating from two base camps, with four days on the plateau and two in the southern lowlands at Obuasi near Potrase (Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett 2005). A second visit to the plateau area was organized from 27-30 August 2010. As in 2005 we camped on the ridge at 750 m (6°14'N, 0°33'W), just before the junction of the two roads (“Y junction”) that have been built in 2006-07. This point is nearly 4 km distant from the gate on the boundary of the forest reserve, situated in the foothills at 350 m.

The old path or disused track continuing north from the camp site where most of our observations took place in 2005 had totally disappeared. There are now two roads, one going down the north-western slopes, and the other climbing up and following the crest of the plateau at just above the altitude of 800 m. These roads were opened by geologists looking for bauxite, and many lateral tracks have been built as well. A certain amount of illegal logging has taken place along these tracks. During our visit in 2010 there was continuous logging (with chainsaws) on the western slopes just below our camp site. As a result the forest canopy is very open in places, with secondary thickets developing underneath. The forest around the gate is largely replaced by farmbrush, and there are some small plantations of plantain just above the gate.

Atewa Range is, with Kakum, one of the two most frequently visited sites by international bird tours and individual ornithologists, since Rockjumper started in 2002. Andrew Hester, resident in Accra 2004-2008, paid many week-end visits to the forest. Ron Demey camped on the ridge for a couple of weeks in June 2006. Thus several new and interesting bird records have come to light, and this report presents the new species records since 2005, with more information provided for selected species. A full list is attached in Appendix.

We had rain every day in August, falling for several hours at night and turning to drizzle and mist in the early morning. Mist cleared by mid-morning and there were sunny spells during the day.

THE AVIFAUNA

Species observed by ourselves are marked by an*. The level of threat of species of conservation concern is given in bold after the species' name, and follows BirdLife International (2008).

1. New species records

African Cuckoo Hawk *Aviceda cuculoides*. Reported by R. Ntakor *et al.* (2009).

Red-thighed Sparrowhawk *Accipiter erythropus*. One seen perched, Aug 2007 (D. Shackelford), is the only

record we have traced.

Black Sparrowhawk *Accipiter melanoleucus*. There have been a few records of this scarce raptor, as by L. Fish-pool in 2007, R. Ntakor and N. Borrow in 2008.

*Black-collared Lovebird *Agapornis swindernianus*. A flock of c. 15 flying around our camp site just before dusk, 27 Aug 2010. This appears to be the first record for Atewa.

Levaillant's Cuckoo *Clamator levaillantii*. This is a dry-season visitor, reported from Dec-Mar (several observers). One was seen on the ridge on 27 May 2007 (A. Hester), an unusual date.

Thick-billed Cuckoo *Pachycoccyx audeberti*. At least two records, one seen and heard on 1-2 Apr 2008 (C. Goblet & J.-M. Daulne) and two heard in Nov 2009 on the way up (J. Pienaar).

African Dwarf Kingfisher *Ceyx lecontei*. One seen in forest understorey, with another singing nearby, Jun 2006 (R. Demey).

*Black Bee-eater *Merops gularis*. One in degraded forest near the gate, 30 Aug 2010.

Least Honeyguide *Indicator exilis*. There are at least two records: one seen through the telescope by C. Goblet & J.-M. Daulne, Apr 2008, and also in May 2008 by N. Borrow.

House Martin *Delichon urbicum*. Palaearctic migrant recorded by A. Hester on 26 Feb 2006 (a small flock) and R. White in Mar of the same year.

*White-throated Greenbul *Phyllastrephus albigularis*. We queried the occurrence of this species in 2005, but we found a few in Aug 2010 in the dense understorey of degraded forest on the top (800 m) as well as just above the gate. Much less common than Icterine Greenbul *P. icterinus*.

*Grey Ground Thrush *Zoothera princei*. The characteristic call of this thrush, a penetrating "srrreee" was heard about 10 times near our camp site in the early morning of 30 Aug 2010, when the bird was probably no more than 6-10 m away (FDL). Seconds later what was possibly this thrush flew from the source of the sound, landed on the track in front of the observer and flew back in soon afterwards.

Blue-shouldered Robin Chat *Cossypha cyanocampter*. A pair well seen in secondary thickets in the foothills by K. Valentine in Mar 2007.

*Forest Scrub Robin *Erythropygia leucosticta*. First reported by A. Hester and D. Hoddinott on the top, singing (and seen) on 20 Aug 2006. Very noisy in the same area in Jul 2008 (A. Hester). Also heard in Mar 2009 (R. Ntakor) and Sep 2010 (K. Valentine). On 28-30 Aug 2010 one was singing persistently in the early morning near our camp site.

*Nimba Flycatcher *Melaenornis annamarulae*. **Vulnerable**. On 6 Feb 2005 an unfamiliar flycatcher song of 4-5 whistles was heard in mid-afternoon on the ridge (FDL); the bird could not be seen and this record was not mentioned in our 2005 report. On 18 Jun 2006 R. Demey heard (and tape-recorded fragments of) a song which he thought belonged to this flycatcher but could not see it. This was the only time he heard it in two weeks. A. Hester finally obtained excellent views of the species on 27 May 2007, a pair in the canopy atop the ridge; he had already suspected this species from brief sightings in 2005-6 (Demey & Hester 2008). On 28-29 Aug 2010 we saw one or two adults regularly in an area of very open canopy to the right of the road along the ridge, about 1 km beyond the "Y junction", at the altitude of 810 m. This is where most bird tours have seen them in recent years (M. Williams pers. comm. 2010). They were often seen in a fruiting *Canthium* 35-40 m tall. The bird(s) spent time resting on horizontal branches, flycatching, hovering briefly among leaves, then hopping along a branch before flying into another tree. They were completely silent, and did not respond to tape playback (of the Liberia tape in Chappuis 2000).

Ashy Flycatcher *Muscicapa caerulescens*. Occasionally reported from degraded forest on the lower slopes (e.g. N. Borrow, May 2011).

Forest Penduline Tit *Anthoscopus flavifrons*. At least three records of this discreet species, by A. Hester (2006), C. Goblet & J.-M. Daulne (Apr 2008) and N. Borrow (May 2008).

*Tiny Sunbird *Nectarinia minulla*. One located (from its song) in degraded forest on the lower slopes, 30 Aug 2010. There have been several other records of this species, by R. White (2006), K. Valentine (2007), N. Borrow (2009), R. Ntakor *et al.* etc.

Pale-fronted Negrofinch *Nigrita luteifrons*. Well seen, in degraded forest on the way up, Apr 2008, by C. Goblet & J.-M. Daulne.

*Bronze Mannikin *Spermestes cucullata*. In common with Black-and-white Mannikin *S. bicolor*, this species

was seen in flocks along the road even above the gate, Aug.

2. Notes on selected species

Spot-breasted Ibis *Bostrychia rara*. Already known from the lower slopes (Obuasi on the Densu stream), the species was recorded flying over the ridge by W. Apraku in 2008.

European Honey Buzzard *Pernis apivorus*. New records by various observers show this Palearctic species to winter from at least November to March. There is also an out-of-season record by A. Hester on 9 Jul 2004.

*Congo Serpent Eagle *Dryotriorchis spectabilis*. Two very noisy individuals on the upper ridge (810 m), 1-2 km beyond "Y junction": on 28 Aug one singing at 16h15 and again at 16h40 for 6 minutes. The next day it was singing in the same area intermittently from 9h40 to 10h40 and again 15h30-35, with a second one further at 16h10-35. On the way back, both birds were again singing from at least 17h35 until 17h55 (dusk was at 18h20). In Jun 2006 R. Demey heard up to two individuals on three days in two weeks. This species has been heard singing also in Nov 2009 (D. Hoddinott) and Feb (in several years). In early Aug 2006 A. Hester noted it as particularly noisy.

Ayres's Hawk Eagle *Hieraetus ayresii*. A bird with a whitish head identified by N. Borrow in May 2008. One previous record by D. Hoddinott (2004).

*Long-tailed Hawk *Urotriorchis macrourus*. A noisy pair and immature on the top, the latter calling persistently just above the western slopes. Adult singing 16h44-16h50 on 29 Aug. Is regularly recorded at Atewa.

*Crowned Eagle *Stephanoaetus coronatus*. One singing briefly at 13h50, top ridge, 28 Aug 2010. Also heard in Feb 2005 (pers. obs.), Mar 2004 (D. Hoddinott), Jun 2006 (R. Demey), early Aug 2006 (A. Hester), Nov 2009 (R. Summers) and Dec 2005 (A. Hester).

Grey Parrot *Psittacus erithacus*. **Near Threatened**. There appear to have been no recent records of this species from the forest, not even in a 2-week visit in Jun 2006 (R. Demey). However, on 15 Feb 2010 two were seen flying over farmland in the foothills on the way to Atewa (E. Krabbe *et al.*).

*Red-fronted Parrot *Poicephalus gularis*. A few birds on the top, 28-29 Aug 2010, and regularly recorded by other visitors.

*Great Blue Turaco *Corythaes cristata*. Certainly uncommon: e.g. R. Demey recorded it (one to three birds) on four days in two weeks, Jun 2006. We heard it once on the top ridge, 28 Aug 2010.

*Red-chested Owlet *Glaucidium tephronotum*. One previous record (A. Riley, May 2002). One was singing in the evening near our tent, 27-29 Aug 2010.

*Akun Eagle Owl *Bubo leucostictus*. One flushed by A. Hester in 2005, in addition to our own record (ridge). A weak tremolo, descending call heard repeatedly at night (27-29 Aug 2010) just below the ridge, given at regular intervals, came almost certainly from a young bird of this species. It was considered too screechy and tremulous to be made by a young Fraser's Eagle Owl. Given how weak it was, the bird must have left the nest recently.

*Fraser's Eagle owl *Bubo poensis*. There was also a young Fraser's giving a thin pure whistle, often breaking off, on 27-29 Aug 2010 just below the ridge, not far from the other young eagle owl.

*Brown Nightjar *Caprimulgus binotatus*. Certainly uncommon at high levels: none recorded in Aug 2010 (and just one in Feb 2005). In two weeks in Jun 2006 R. Demey saw just one above the forest track on the ridge, at 18h45.

*Blue-headed Bee-eater *Merops muelleri*. Reported by many observers and rather common on the Atewa plateau, as singles, pairs or trios.

Red-billed Dwarf Hornbill *Tockus camurus*. Appears scarce at Atewa. We did not come across it on either visit; rated as uncommon (few contacts) in two weeks in Jun 2006 (R. Demey).

*Brown-cheeked Hornbill *Bycanistes cylindricus*. **Near Threatened**. This species was common in Feb 2005 (up to 12 together), but none were encountered in Aug 2010. In Jun 2006 R. Demey heard/saw up to two birds on only three days, and it was also recorded in Aug 2006 (D. Hoddinott) and Dec 2007 (L. Fish-pool). It was still recorded by N. Borrow on 30 Apr 2010.

*Piping Hornbill *Bycanistes fistulator*. Very rare at Atewa (no records traced since 1976), thus a pair seen on the top ridge on 28 Aug 2010 is worth mentioning.

- Yellow-casqued Hornbill *Ceratogymna elata*. **Near Threatened**. We have not traced any records since 2005 (per hunters); in fact the only firm date remains May 2002 (A. Riley *et al.*).
- *Yellow-spotted Barbet *Buccanodon duchaillui*. One of the most persistent callers (with Yellow-whiskered Greenbul *Andropadus latirostris*) throughout the day, although does not start early (8h00 on 28 Aug, 6h50 on 29 Aug, 10h10 on 30 Aug after protracted drizzle). Numerous on the top, but numbers drop out below 550-600 m.
- *Yellow-footed Honeyguide *Melignomon eisentrauti*. **Data Deficient**. It was not possible to check the calling site of 2005, as the path leading to the area has disappeared. However, a bird was heard singing on the upper slopes (*c.* 800 m before the “Y junction”) in the afternoon of 27 Aug, at 14h15, at the altitude of 660 m; it stopped after 10 minutes for at least 30 minutes. One was heard singing in the same area on 18 Dec 2007, at 13h00, by L. Fishpool. Has been seen occasionally by other observers, e.g. N. Borrow.
- Lesser (Thick-billed) Honeyguide *Indicator minor*. Two trying to get into nests at a colony of Bristle-nosed Barbets *Gymnobucco peli* in early Aug 2006 (A. Hester), and seen harassed by these barbets on another occasion (A. Hester).
- *Willcocks’s Honeyguide *Indicator willcocksii*. A. Hester heard the song in a big *Ceiba* on the slopes in both 2005 and Aug 2006, almost certainly the same tree as where we heard it in Feb 2005.
- *Square-tailed Saw-sing *Psolidoprocne nitens*. Recorded up to the high plateau, where we noted a pair around our camp site on 27 Aug 2010.
- *Purple-throated Cuckoo-shrike *Campephaga quiscalina*. It is common on the plateau, but much less noisy in Aug than in the dry season: heard only once in three days.
- *Green-tailed Bristlebill *Bleda eximius*. **Vulnerable**. Rather more noisy in Aug 2010 than in Feb (2005), with up to four birds singing on the upper slopes and the top ridge (along 2 km of track), in the morning but also on sunny afternoons. Was in fact more vocal than Red-tailed Bristlebill *B. syndactylus*.
- *Yellow-bearded Greenbul *Criniger olivaceus*. **Vulnerable**. Not seen on this visit (but in 2005), and appears rather local: pairs or individual located in only three mixed bird parties in two weeks, Jun 2006 (R. Demey). Seen occasionally by bird tours. The logging taking place at Atewa likely affects this species.
- Wood Warbler *Phylloscopus sibilatrix*. Additional records of this Palaearctic migrant include new extreme dates, from third week of November (Rockjumper) to 30 Mar (2008, C. Goblet & J.-M. Daulne).
- *Little Grey Flycatcher *Muscicapa epulata*. One pair in degraded forest on the top. R. Demey saw it in six locations in two weeks (Jun 2006), and it is fairly often seen by bird tours.
- *Shrike-Flycatcher *Megabyas flammulatus*. Rather conspicuous (and singing) in the very open forest on the top ridge, together with Bioko Batis and Little Grey Flycatcher. Seen on eight days out of 16 in Jun 2006 (R. Demey). The vocal dialect of Shrike-Flycatcher in south-west Ghana is very distinctive, and different from that in eastern Ghana: the song consists of two or three loud, high-pitched “*pluee, pluee*” notes, somewhat ascending in pitch. Another dialect was heard in Sierra Leone (Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett 2008).
- *Bioko Batis *Batis poensis*. Apparently singing less in Aug 2010 than in Feb 2005 when noted as very noisy (on a daily basis). Interestingly none heard singing in two weeks in Jun 2006, although a few seen (R. Demey).
- *Red-cheeked Wattle-eye *Dyaphorophya blissetti*. Found locally on the high plateau, in thickets in degraded forest, 28 Aug 2010. Several observations by R. Demey, including of frantic displays (Jun 2006).
- *Dusky Crested Flycatcher *Elminia nigromitrata*. Atewa may be one of the few sites in Ghana where this species could be qualified as fairly common (cf. Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett 2005). R. Demey found it common in bird parties in Jun 2006; in Aug 2010 it was seen on the top ridge even in rather degraded forest.
- *Rufous-winged Illadopsis *Illadopsis rufescens*. **Near Threatened**. One or two singing for over 30 minutes each morning after dawn (28-30 Aug), in the densest section of forest on the eastern slope (where also heard in Feb 2005). All other illadopsis were singing in August, including Pale-breasted *I. rufipennis*, unlike the situation at Ankasa at this time of year. R. Demey heard up to four *I. rufescens* daily in Jun 2006; singing also in Dec 2007 in *c.* three sites (L. Fishpool). Coming well to tape on 6 Mar 2005 (A. Hester).
- *Sooty Boubou *Laniarius leucorhynchus*. One pair singing in understorey in very degraded forest on the top ridge, *c.* 810 m, 28 Aug 2010.

- *Fiery-breasted Bush Shrike *Malaconotus cruentus*. Fairly widespread in open canopy on the plateau, and reported by many observers. Typical of hill situations in both south-western and eastern Ghana.
- *Copper-tailed Glossy Starling *Lamprotornis cupreocauda*. **Near Threatened**. Fairly common at Atewa, and may form flocks in the rainy season (when not breeding): thus a group of *c.* 20 going to roost evening of 28 Aug 2010.
- *Splendid Glossy Starling *Lamprotornis splendidus*. A noisy pair halfway up the slope in Aug 2010. Curiously unrecorded by R. Demey in Jun 2006.
- Grosbeak Weaver *Amblyospiza albifrons*. From many observers: recorded most months in farmbush and thickets near the gate, sometimes in large flocks (over 50 in Mar, over 60 in May); breeds in long grass below the gate in the rains (Sep 2010, G. Valentine).
- *Red-fronted Antpecker *Parmoptila rubrifrons*. **Near Threatened**. A female of this discreet species seen on the top ridge, 28 Aug 2010 (and a few seen in Feb 2005). Seen at two locations in two weeks in Jun 2006, including a pair with 2-3 independent juveniles (R. Demey). Also reported by G. Valentine (2009).

The ripe fruits of a large *Canthium*, on the top ridge at 810 m, attracted the following species in Aug 2010: African Green Pigeon *Treron calvus*, Naked-faced Barbet *Gymnobucco calvus*, Speckled Tinkerbird *Pogoniulus scolopaceus*, Yellow-throated Tinkerbird *P. subsulphureus*, Hairy-breasted Barbet *Tricholaema hirsuta*, Yellow-billed Barbet *Trachylaemus purpuratus*, Slender-billed Greenbul *Andropadus gracilirostris* and Golden Greenbul *Calyptocichla serina*.

3. Marginal species

Some species are confined mainly to farmbush near the gate. Among birds not retained for the Atewa list, as seen in farmbush well below the gate, one may cite: Yellow-rumped Tinkerbird *Pogoniulus bilineatus* (A. Hester *et al.*), Fanti Saw-wing *Psalidoprocne pristoptera* (N. Borrow, 29 Apr 2010), Garden Warbler *Sylvia borin* (R. Summers, Nov-Dec 2009), Pale Flycatcher *Bradornis pallidus* (N. Borrow *et al.*), Pied Flycatcher *Ficedula hypoleuca* (J. Pienaar, Dec 2008) and Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata* (B. Phalan, 9 Apr 2006 and R. Summers, Dec 2009).

Some tour groups have been looking for Baumann's Greenbul *Phyllastrephus baumanni* at Atewa and may feel frustrated at not finding it. A. Hester did find it in *Chromolaena* bush below the gate and (as we did) along the road past Kibi. But after three years of Atlas surveys, we have come to the conclusion that it is rare in the area (in farmbush) and that Atewa represents an outpost. The bird is far more common in the transition zone, as in Kalakpa, and especially Amedzofe north to Kyabobo.

4. Rejected or unconfirmed species

Dusky Long-tailed Cuckoo *Cercococcyx mechowi*. There are still no confirmed records by any of the experienced tour guides, local ornithologists (e.g. A. Hester) nor ourselves, of a species that is confused by some with at least Olive Long-tailed Cuckoo; see also Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett (2005). One old record (based on sound) by L. Cole in Grimes (1987) is similarly uncertain, especially as the author did not report the Olive Long-tailed Cuckoo for the same locality.

Spotted Greenbul *Ixonotus guttatus*. There have been one or two reports by tourists (e.g. Feb 2010), but we feel this requires confirmation; it is sometimes confused with Western Nicator *Nicator chloris*.

Yellow-breasted Apalis *Apalis flavida*. If "Tewa" Forest Reserve in Grimes (1987: 165) is meant for Atewa, then a record by N. Wood (in Grimes 1987) is inherently unlikely to be this species.

Capuchin Babbler *Phyllanthus atripennis*. One seen briefly on the edge of thicket on the lower slopes by C. Goblet, Apr 2008. Never recorded again and requires confirmation.

There are still no records for several other species we queried in 2005, including Afep Pigeon *Columba uncinata* and Black-casqued Hornbill *Ceratogymna atrata*.

5. Breeding records and seasonality of calling

Our impression in late Aug 2010 was that some species or families were more quiet than in Feb 2005. In particular cuckoos were not yet fully active. Olive Long-tailed Cuckoo *Cercococcyx olivinus* was heard on the ridge mid-afternoon and at dusk (singles songs) on 28 Aug, and once on the way down (10h00) on 30 Aug. Similarly Black Cuckoo *Cuculus clamosus* sang for brief periods in the morning or afternoon of 27-28, and mid-day only (in mist) on the 29th. Red-chested Cuckoo *C. solitarius* sang for a few minutes evening of 27 and 28 Aug and midday (mist) on the 29th. Klaas's and Emerald Cuckoos *Chrysococcyx klaas* and *C. cupreus* sang for brief periods every day (Emerald was more noisy at medium altitudes, 400-450 m on the road from Akropong to Kibi). In Jun 2006 R. Demey noted much less activity still: no Olive Long-tailed and no Red-chested were heard in two weeks, Black Cuckoo was heard only once, and Emerald only five times, for short periods.

Of other groups, Serpent Eagles were rather noisy (see above); a few Forest Francolins *Francolinus lathami* sang every day at dusk; Nkulengu Rails *Himantornis haematopus* sang every night; Bronze-naped Pigeons *Columba iriditorques* were almost silent (one song on 29 Aug) and both doves (Tambourine and Blue-headed *Turtur tympanistris* and *T. brehmeri*) sang occasionally during the day, not first thing at dawn as they do in the dry season; Yellow-billed Turacos *Tauraco macrorhynchus* were very noisy; owls were fairly quiet except for young eagle owls and one Red-chested Owlet (R. Demey found them silent in Jun 2006); two Narina's Trogons sang occasionally for a few minutes each day; Chocolate-backed and Blue-breasted Kingfishers *Halcyon badia* and *H. malimbica* were fairly noisy; Blue-throated Rollers *Eurystomus gularis* were completely quiet; all barbets and tinkerbirds were noisy, Yellow-spotted Barbet persistently so. Rufous-sided Broadbill *Smithornis rufolateralis* was almost silent (heard once); Purple-throated Cuckoo-shrikes were quiet (see above). Some of the bulbuls were very noisy (e.g. Icterine, Western Bearded Greenbul *Criniger barbatus*, even Green-tailed Bristlebill) and Yellow-whiskered as well as Little Greenbul *A. virens* sang persistently throughout the day. Forest Robins *Stiphrornis erythrothorax* were singing very little, but other Turdidae were more noisy, including of course Forest Scrub Robin (see above) and White-tailed Ant Thrush *Neocossyphus poensis* (the latter singing and also alarm-calling persistently in one area). All *Illadopsis* species were singing, although not persistently. Some of the flycatchers were more quiet than in the dry season, especially Bioko Batis and Grey-throated Flycatcher *Myioparus griseigularis*; Velvet-mantled Drongos *Dicrurus (adsimilis) modestus* were also more quiet and less conspicuous than in the dry season. Both Orioles *O. nigripennis* and *O. brachyrhynchus* were moderately noisy (mornings).

There were striking differences with the situation in Ankasa in Aug 2010: both Forest Robins and Olive Long-tailed Cuckoos were very noisy at Ankasa (and the robin proven to breed), whereas *Illadopsis* spp. were far more quiet (Pale-breasted not singing and Rufous-winged hardly).

Breeding records obtained in Feb 2005 suggest that December is an important month of egg-laying in many species. Observations at Tano Ofin in Jan 2009 also suggest that the main breeding season in upland forest is in the dry season. There were far fewer signs of recent breeding in Jun-Aug:

Akun and Fraser's Eagle Owls. The weakness of calls coming from young of both species late Aug 2010 suggests they had left the nest fairly recently (eggs perhaps Apr or May).

Grey Longbill *Macrosphenus concolor*. Pair courtship feeding on 30 Aug 2010. Feeding fledgling on 20 Jun 2006 (R. Demey); egg-laying Apr or May.

Little Grey Flycatcher. Pair taking food to a nest, high up, 27 May 2007 (A. Hester); thus egg-laying May. Pair feeding fledgling on 7 Jun 2006 (R. Demey); egg-laying Apr.

Fraser's Sunbird *Deleornis fraseri*. Some feeding juveniles in Jun 2006 (R. Demey), suggesting some egg-laying took place in Apr.

6. Species of conservation concern

Following BirdLife International (2008), 10 species of conservation concern are or were known to occur at Atewa: Grey Parrot (Near Threatened; possibly no longer present), Brown-cheeked Hornbill (Near Threatened), Yellow-casqued Hornbill (Near Threatened, no records since 2002), Yellow-footed Honeyguide (Data

Deficient), Yellow-headed (White-necked) Picathartes *Picathartes gymnocephalus* (Vulnerable), Green-tailed Bristlebill (Vulnerable, but this widespread bulbul should be downgraded to Near Threatened), Yellow-bearded Greenbul (Vulnerable), Rufous-winged Illadopsis (Near Threatened), Copper-tailed Glossy Starling (Near Threatened) and Red-fronted Antpecker (Near Threatened). A. Hester also met a hunter at Sagyimase who knew the Picathartes but the nesting sites need to be identified, with the help of local hunters. The decreasing frequency of the large hornbills gives cause for concern.

THE IMPORTANCE OF ATEWA FOR BIRDS AND CONSERVATION

By 2005 Atewa Range was known to have 207 bird species; thus, with 20 additions since, the overall total is of 227 species. Of those, c. 150 are Guineo-Congolian biome species, as several have been added to the previous list: *Accipiter erythropus*, *Agapornis swindernianus*, *Ceyx lecontei*, *Merops gularis*, *Indicator exilis*, *Phyllastrephus albigularis*, *Zoothera princei*, *Cossypha cyanocampter*, *Erythropygia leucosticta*, *Melaenornis annamarulae*, *Anthoscopus flavifrons*, *Nectarinia minulla* and *Nigrita luteifrons*.

The forest at Atewa is the only site in Ghana where the rare Nimba Flycatcher has been found, in an easterly extension from Ivory Coast (cf. Demey & Hester 2008). This Upper Guinea endemic, found mainly at medium altitudes, should be sought for at Tano Ofin; preliminary investigations there in January 2009 did not locate it. Atewa is only one of three sites for another upland bird, the ill-named Lowland Akalat *Sheppardia cyornithopsis*, also found at Tano Ofin (pers. obs.). Other species particularly characteristic of hill or plateau situations in south-west Ghana include Blue-headed Bee-eater, Forest Scrub Robin, Many-coloured Bush Shrike *Malaconotus multicolor*, Fiery-breasted Bush Shrike and Dusky Tit *Parus funereus*.

The conservation of Atewa forest is of the utmost importance for the survival of the special upland species, above all of Nimba Flycatcher, and also of several other species of conservation concern (as above). But the forest is increasingly threatened by illegal logging. New roads opened by bauxite prospectors have also increased access for poachers of timber and wildlife. The large hornbills are decreasing; the architecture of the forest is being modified by excessive logging and some species must suffer as a result (e.g. Rufous-winged Illadopsis, Yellow-bearded Greenbul...). In 2005 we recorded a group of Black-and-white Colobus *Colobus vellerosus* near pour camp; they were actively sought by a hunter at the time, and indeed they seem to have disappeared. On this visit we flushed only one silent monkey (*Cercopithecus* sp.).

Many bird tours and private individuals visit Atewa each year, as it provides an interesting variety of bird species, some of them unique in Ghana. Ecotourism should in theory be encouraged by the Forestry Commission. Moreover Atewa is a "Globally Significant Biodiversity Area", where in theory logging is prohibited. The reality is very different: Forestry staff based in Kibi apparently do nothing to control or limit the amount of illegal logging. In 2009-10 one of the staff has been demanding an extortionate amount of money for opening the gate to visitors, all of which goes into his pocket.

The presence of bauxite on the plateau represents an even more serious threat to the integrity of the forest. However, the fact that the water supply for the capital city of Accra originates in Atewa Range (through several large streams, especially the Densu) represents, for the general public and the Government of Ghana, the most important argument for the protection of the forest. Let's hope that the Government will act accordingly.

REFERENCES

- BirdLife International 2008. *Threatened birds of the world*. CD-ROM. Cambridge, UK: BirdLife International.
- Chappuis C. 2000. *Oiseaux d'Afrique (African bird sounds)*. 2. West and Central Africa. (11 CDs). Paris: SEOF & London: British Library.
- Demey R. & Hester A. 2008. First records of Nimba Flycatcher *Melaenornis annamarulae* for Ghana. *Bull. Afr. Bird Club* 15: 95-96.
- Dowsett-Lemaire F. & Dowsett R.J. 2005. Ornithological surveys in Atewa Range Forest Reserve (February 2005). WDSP Report No. 50-b. Accra: Wildlife Division.
- Dowsett-Lemaire F. & Dowsett R.J. 2008. Selected notes on birds of Gola Forest and surroundings, Sierra Leone, including three new species for the country. *Bull. Afr. Bird Club* 15: 215-227.
- Grimes L.G. 1987. *The birds of Ghana*. London: B.O.U. Check-list no. 9.

CHECKLIST OF THE BIRDS OF ATEWA RANGE FOREST RESERVE

Compiled by R.J. Dowsett & F. Dowsett-Lemaire (2011) (e-mail: Dowsett@aol.com)

The English names used generally follow the field guides by Borrow & Demey (2001, 2004. *Birds of Western Africa*. London: Christopher Helm). Abbreviations used: Res. = Resident; PM = Palearctic (Eurasian) migrant; AM = Intra-African migrant; Irreg.= Irregular visitor. "Marginal" refers to species found essentially or exclusively in farmbush on the margins of the reserve. Farmbush species found outside the boundaries are not included. *designates species recorded by ourselves over our two visits of 2005 and 2010. The status of many species is poorly known, as we do not have reliable observations for all times of year.

| Species | Status..... | Observations |
|--|-----------------------|--------------|
| *White-crested Tiger Heron <i>Tigriornis leucolopha</i> | Res..... | |
| Spot-breasted Ibis <i>Bostrychia rara</i> | Res..... | |
| African Cuckoo Hawk <i>Aviceda cuculoides</i> | Res..... | |
| European Honey Buzzard <i>Pernis apivorus</i> | PM..... | |
| *Yellow-billed Kite <i>Milvus m. parasitus</i> (marginal)..... | AM..... | |
| *Palm-nut Vulture <i>Gypohierax angolensis</i> | Res..... | |
| *Hooded Vulture <i>Necrosyrtes monachus</i> (marginal)..... | Res..... | |
| *Brown Snake Eagle <i>Circaetus cinereus</i> (marginal)..... | Res..... | |
| *Congo Serpent Eagle <i>Dryotriorchis spectabilis</i> | Res..... | |
| *African Harrier Hawk <i>Polyboroides typus</i> | Res..... | |
| Red-thighed Sparrowhawk <i>Accipiter erythropus</i> | Res..... | |
| Black Sparrowhawk <i>Accipiter melanoleucus</i> | Res..... | |
| *African Goshawk <i>Accipiter tachiro</i> | Res..... | |
| *Long-tailed Hawk <i>Urotriorchis macrourus</i> | Res..... | |
| Red-necked Buzzard <i>Buteo auguralis</i> | AM..... | |
| Ayres's Hawk Eagle <i>Hieraetus ayresii</i> | Res..... | |
| *Cassin's Hawk Eagle <i>Spizaetus africanus</i> | Res..... | |
| *Crowned Eagle <i>Stephanoaetus coronatus</i> | Res..... | |
| *African Hobby <i>Falco cuvieri</i> | Res..... | |
| *Latham's Forest Francolin <i>Francolinus lathamii</i> | Res..... | |
| *Ahanta Francolin <i>Francolinus achantensis</i> (marginal)..... | Res..... | |
| *Crested Guineafowl <i>Guttera pucherani</i> | Res..... | |
| *Nkulengu Rail <i>Himantornis haematopus</i> | Res..... | |
| *White-spotted Flufftail <i>Sarothrura pulchra</i> | Res..... | |
| African Finfoot <i>Podica senegalensis</i> | Res..... | |
| *Western Bronze-naped Pigeon <i>Columba (delegorguei) iriditorques</i> | Res..... | |
| *Blue-spotted Wood Dove <i>Turtur afer</i> (marginal)..... | Res..... | |
| *Tambourine Dove <i>Turtur tympanistris</i> | Res..... | |
| *Blue-headed Wood Dove <i>Turtur brehmeri</i> | Res..... | |
| *African Green Pigeon <i>Treron calvus</i> | Res..... | |
| Grey Parrot <i>Psittacus erithacus</i> | Irreg (extinct?)..... | |
| *Red-fronted Parrot <i>Poicephalus gulielmi</i> | Res..... | |
| *Black-collared Lovebird <i>Agapornis swindernianus</i> | Res..... | |
| *Yellow-billed Turaco <i>Tauraco macrorhynchus</i> | Res..... | |
| *Great Blue Turaco <i>Corythaeola cristata</i> | Res..... | |
| Levaillant's Cuckoo <i>Clamator levaillantii</i> | AM..... | |
| Thick-billed Cuckoo <i>Pachycoccyx audeberti</i> | Res..... | |
| *Red-chested Cuckoo <i>Cuculus solitarius</i> | Res..... | |
| *Black Cuckoo <i>Cuculus clamosus</i> | Res..... | |
| *Olive Long-tailed Cuckoo <i>Cercococcyx olivinus</i> | Res..... | |
| *African Emerald Cuckoo <i>Chrysococcyx cupreus</i> | Res..... | |

| Species | Status | Observations |
|--|--------------|--------------------|
| *Yellow-throated Cuckoo <i>Chrysococcyx flavigularis</i> | Res | |
| *Klaas's Cuckoo <i>Chrysococcyx klaas</i> | Res | |
| *Didric Cuckoo <i>Chrysococcyx caprius</i> (marginal) | Res | |
| *Yellowbill <i>Ceuthmochares aereus</i> | Res | |
| *Black-throated Coucal <i>Centropus leucogaster</i> | Res | |
| Blue-headed Coucal <i>Centropus monachus</i> (marginal) | Res | |
| *Fraser's Eagle Owl <i>Bubo poensis</i> | Res | |
| *Akun Eagle Owl <i>Bubo leucostictus</i> | Res | |
| *Red-chested Owlet <i>Glaucidium tephronotum</i> | Res | |
| *African Wood Owl <i>Strix woodfordii</i> | Res | |
| *Brown Nightjar <i>Caprimulgus (Veles) binotatus</i> | Res | |
| *Black Spinetail <i>Telacanthura melanopygia</i> | Res | |
| *Sabine's Spinetail <i>Rhaphidura sabini</i> | Res | |
| *Cassin's Spinetail <i>Neafrapus cassini</i> | Res | |
| *Common (European) Swift <i>Apus apus</i> | PM | |
| Little Swift <i>Apus affinis</i> (marginal) | Res | |
| *Bates's Swift <i>Apus batesi</i> | Res | |
| *Narina's Trogon <i>Apaloderma narina</i> | Res | |
| *Shining-blue Kingfisher <i>Alcedo quadibrachys</i> | Res | |
| *White-bellied Kingfisher <i>Alcedo leucogaster</i> | Res | |
| African Dwarf Kingfisher <i>Ceyx lecontei</i> | Res | |
| *African Pygmy Kingfisher <i>Ceyx pictus</i> (marginal) | Res | |
| *Chocolate-backed Kingfisher <i>Halcyon badia</i> | Res | |
| *Blue-breasted Kingfisher <i>Halcyon malimbica</i> | Res | |
| *Woodland Kingfisher <i>Halcyon senegalensis</i> (marginal) | Res | |
| *Black Bee-eater <i>Merops gularis</i> (marginal) | Res | |
| *Blue-headed Bee-eater <i>Merops muelleri</i> | Res | |
| *White-throated Bee-eater <i>Merops albicollis</i> | AM | |
| *Rosy Bee-eater <i>Merops malimbicus</i> (marginal) | AM | |
| *Blue-throated Roller <i>Eurystomus gularis</i> | Res | |
| *White-headed Wood Hoopoe <i>Phoeniculus bollei</i> | Res | |
| *Forest Wood Hoopoe <i>Phoeniculus castaneiceps</i> | Res | |
| *White-crested Hornbill <i>Tropicranus albocristatus</i> | Res | |
| *Black Dwarf Hornbill <i>Tockus hartlaubi</i> | Res | |
| Red-billed Dwarf Hornbill <i>Tockus camurus</i> | Res | |
| *African Pied Hornbill <i>Tockus fasciatus</i> | Res | |
| *Piping Hornbill <i>Bycanistes fistulator</i> | Irreg | |
| *Brown-cheeked Hornbill <i>Bycanistes cylindricus</i> | Res | |
| Yellow-casqued Hornbill <i>Ceratogymna elata</i> | Res | |
| *Naked-faced Barbet <i>Gymnobucco calvus</i> | Res | |
| *Bristle-nosed Barbet <i>Gymnobucco peli</i> | Res | |
| *Yellow-spotted Barbet <i>Buccanodon duchaillui</i> | Res | |
| *Speckled Tinkerbird <i>Pogoniulus scolopaceus</i> | Res | |
| *Yellow-throated Tinkerbird <i>Pogoniulus subsulphureus</i> | Res | |
| *Red-rumped Tinkerbird <i>Pogoniulus atroflavus</i> | Res | |
| *Hairy-breasted Barbet <i>Tricholaema hirsuta</i> | Res | |
| *Yellow-billed Barbet <i>Trachylaemus purpuratus</i> | Res | |
| Cassin's Honeybird <i>Prodotiscus insignis</i> | Res | |
| *Yellow-footed Honeyguide <i>Melignomon eisentrauti</i> | Res | |
| *Spotted Honeyguide <i>Indicator maculatus</i> | Res | |
| *Lesser (Thick-billed) Honeyguide <i>Indicator minor conirostris</i> | Res | |
| Least Honeyguide <i>Indicator exilis</i> | Res | |
| *Willcocks's Honeyguide <i>Indicator willcocksii</i> | Res | |
| *Little Green Woodpecker <i>Campethera maculosa</i> | Res | |

| Species | Status | Observations |
|--|--------------|--------------|
| *Buff-spotted Woodpecker <i>Campethera nivos</i> | Res | |
| Brown-eared Woodpecker <i>Campethera caroli</i> | Res | |
| *Gabon Woodpecker <i>Dendropicos gabonensis</i> | Res | |
| *Fire-bellied Woodpecker <i>Thripias pyrrhogaster</i> | Res | |
| *Rufous-sided Broadbill <i>Smithornis rufolateralis</i> | Res | |
| *Square-tailed Saw-wing <i>Psalidoprocne nitens</i> | Res | |
| *Barn (European) Swallow <i>Hirundo rustica</i> | PM | |
| Common House Martin <i>Delichon urbicum</i> | PM | |
| *Purple-throated Cuckoo-shrike <i>Campephaga quiscalina</i> | Res | |
| *Blue Cuckoo-shrike <i>Coracina azurea</i> | Res | |
| *Little Greenbul <i>Andropadus virens</i> | Res | |
| *Little Grey Greenbul <i>Andropadus gracilis</i> | Res | |
| *Ansorge's Greenbul <i>Andropadus ansorgei</i> | Res | |
| *Cameroon Sombre Greenbul <i>Andropadus curvirostris</i> | Res | |
| *Slender-billed Greenbul <i>Andropadus gracilirostris</i> | Res | |
| *Yellow-whiskered Greenbul <i>Andropadus latirostris</i> | Res | |
| *Golden Greenbul <i>Calyptocichla serina</i> | Res | |
| *Honeyguide Greenbul <i>Baeopogon indicator</i> | Res | |
| *Simple Leaflove <i>Chlorocichla simplex</i> (marginal) | Res | |
| *Swamp Palm Bulbul <i>Thescelocichla leucopleura</i> | Res | |
| *Baumann's Greenbul <i>Phyllastrephus baumanni</i> (marginal) | Res | |
| *Icterine Greenbul <i>Phyllastrephus icterinus</i> | Res | |
| *White-throated Greenbul <i>Phyllastrephus albigularis</i> | Res | |
| *Red-tailed Bristlebill <i>Bleda syndactylus</i> | Res | |
| *Green-tailed Bristlebill <i>Bleda eximius</i> | Res | |
| *Grey-headed Bristlebill <i>Bleda canicapillus</i> | Res | |
| *Western Bearded Greenbul <i>Criniger barbatus</i> | Res | |
| *Red-tailed Greenbul <i>Criniger calurus</i> | Res | |
| *Yellow-bearded Greenbul <i>Criniger olivaceus</i> | Res | |
| *Common Bulbul <i>Pycnonotus barbatus</i> (marginal) | Res | |
| *Western Nicator <i>Nicator chloris</i> | Res | |
| *White-tailed Ant Thrush <i>Neocossyphus poensis</i> | Res | |
| *Grey Ground Thrush <i>Zoothera princei</i> | Res | |
| *Finsch's Flycatcher Thrush <i>Stizorhina fraseri finschi</i> | Res | |
| *Fire-crested (White-tailed) Alethe <i>Alethe diademata</i> | Res | |
| *Brown-chested Alethe <i>Alethe poliocephala</i> | Res | |
| *Forest Robin <i>Stiphornis erythrothorax</i> | Res | |
| *Lowland Akalat <i>Sheppardia cyornithopsis</i> | Res | |
| Blue-shouldered Robin Chat <i>Cossypha cyanocampter</i> (marginal) | Res | |
| *Forest Scrub Robin <i>Erythropygia leucosticta</i> | Res | |
| *Melodious Warbler <i>Hippolais polyglotta</i> (marginal) | PM | |
| *Rufous-crowned Eremomela <i>Eremomela badiceps</i> | Res | |
| *Green Crombec <i>Sylvietta virens</i> | Res | |
| *Yellow-bellied Crombec <i>Sylvietta denti</i> | Res | |
| *Grey Longbill <i>Macrosphenus concolor</i> | Res | |
| *Kemp's Longbill <i>Macrosphenus kempii</i> | Res | |
| *Willow Warbler <i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i> (marginal) | PM | |
| *Wood Warbler <i>Phylloscopus sibilatrix</i> | PM | |
| *Violet-backed Hyliota <i>Hyliota violacea</i> | Res | |
| *Green Hylia <i>Hylia prasina</i> | Res | |
| *Tawny-flanked Prinia <i>Prinia subflava</i> (marginal) | Res | |
| *Black-capped Apalis <i>Apalis nigriceps</i> | Res | |
| *Sharpe's Apalis <i>Apalis sharpii</i> | Res | |
| *Grey-backed Camaroptera <i>Camaroptera brachyura</i> (marginal) | Res | |

| Species | Status | Observations |
|--|--------------|--------------------|
| *Yellow-browed Camaroptera <i>Camaroptera superciliaris</i> | Res | |
| *Olive-green Camaroptera <i>Camaroptera chloronota</i> | Res | |
| *Fraser's Forest Flycatcher <i>Fraseria ocreata</i> | Res | |
| *Nimba Flycatcher <i>Melaenornis annamarulae</i> | Res | |
| *Olivaceous Flycatcher <i>Muscicapa olivascens</i> | Res | |
| *Little Grey Flycatcher <i>Muscicapa epulata</i> | Res | |
| Ashy Flycatcher <i>Muscicapa caerulescens</i> (marginal) | Res | |
| *Dusky-blue Flycatcher <i>Muscicapa comitata</i> (marginal) | Res | |
| *Ussher's Flycatcher <i>Muscicapa ussheri</i> | Res | |
| *Grey-throated Flycatcher <i>Myioparus griseigularis</i> | Res | |
| Lead-coloured Flycatcher <i>Myioparus plumbeus</i> (marginal) | Res | |
| *Shrike-Flycatcher <i>Megabyas flammulatus</i> | Res | |
| *Black-and-white Flycatcher <i>Bias musicus</i> (marginal) | Res | |
| *Bioko Batis <i>Batis poensis</i> | Res | |
| *Red-cheeked Wattle-eye <i>Dyaphorophya blissetti</i> | Res | |
| *Chestnut Wattle-eye <i>Dyaphorophya castanea</i> | Res | |
| *Chestnut-capped Flycatcher <i>Erythrocerus mccallii</i> | Res | |
| *Dusky Crested Flycatcher <i>Elminia nigromitrata</i> | Res | |
| *Blue-headed Crested Flycatcher <i>Trochocercus nitens</i> | Res | |
| *African Paradise Flycatcher <i>Terpsiphone viridis</i> | AM | |
| *Red-bellied Paradise Flycatcher <i>Terpsiphone rufiventer</i> | Res | |
| Yellow-headed Picathartes <i>Picathartes gymnocephalus</i> | Res | |
| *Brown Illadopsis <i>Illadopsis fulvescens</i> | Res | |
| *Pale-breasted Illadopsis <i>Illadopsis rufipennis</i> | Res | |
| *Blackcap Illadopsis <i>Illadopsis cleaveri</i> | Res | |
| *Rufous-winged Illadopsis <i>Illadopsis rufescens</i> | Res | |
| *Dusky Tit <i>Parus funereus</i> | Res | |
| Forest Penduline Tit <i>Anthoscopus flavifrons</i> | Res | |
| *Tit-hylia <i>Pholidornis rushiae</i> | Res | |
| *Fraser's Sunbird <i>Deleornis fraseri</i> | Res | |
| *Green (Yellow-chinned) Sunbird <i>Anthreptes rectirostris</i> | Res | |
| *Collared Sunbird <i>Anthreptes collaris</i> | Res | |
| *Little Green Sunbird <i>Nectarinia seimundi</i> | Res | |
| *Olive Sunbird <i>Nectarinia olivacea</i> | Res | |
| *Bates's Sunbird <i>Nectarinia batesi</i> | Res | |
| *Blue-throated Brown Sunbird <i>Nectarinia cyanolaema</i> | Res | |
| *Buff-throated Sunbird <i>Nectarinia adelberti</i> | Res | |
| *Olive-bellied Sunbird <i>Nectarinia chloropygia</i> | Res | |
| *Tiny Sunbird <i>Nectarinia minulla</i> | Res | |
| *Johanna's Sunbird <i>Nectarinia johanna</i> | Res | |
| *Superb Sunbird <i>Nectarinia superba</i> | Res | |
| *Yellow White-eye <i>Zosterops senegalensis</i> (marginal) | Res | |
| *Western Black-headed Oriole <i>Oriolus brachyrhynchus</i> | Res | |
| *Black-winged Oriole <i>Oriolus nigripennis</i> | Res | |
| *Sabine's Puffback <i>Dryoscopus sabin</i> | Res | |
| *Sooty Boubou <i>Laniarius leucorhynchus</i> | Res | |
| *Many-coloured Bush Shrike <i>Malaconotus multicolor</i> | Res | |
| *Fiery-breasted Bush Shrike <i>Malaconotus cruentus</i> | Res | |
| *Red-billed Helmet Shrike <i>Prionops caniceps</i> | Res | |
| *Shining Drongo <i>Dicrurus atripennis</i> | Res | |
| *Velvet-mantled Drongo <i>Dicrurus (adsimilis) modestus</i> | Res | |
| *Pied Crow <i>Corvus albus</i> (marginal) | Res | |
| *Narrow-tailed Starling <i>Poeoptera lugubris</i> | Res | |
| *Forest Chestnut-winged Starling <i>Onychognathus fulgidus</i> | Res | |

