

in Africa, south to at least Butiaba (1°49'N) in western Uganda (Britton 1980). I can find no evidence of its occurrence in Kenya, the southernmost limit given by Moreau (1972), Glutz von Blotzheim, Bauer & Bezzel (1973) and Cramp & Simmons (1980). The Butiaba records refer to four collected females (and three other birds seen) in December 1901 (Jackson 1938). It may, therefore, be only an irregular visitor to East Africa, but most crane species are very infrequently recorded, and the lack of sightings is possibly due more to the difficulty experienced in obtaining good views of these secretive birds and to observers' unfamiliarity with them, than to an actual scarcity of cranes. Nevertheless, its occurrence as far south as Zambia is unexpected.

I have Ndola records of the Spotted Crane for all years from 1975 to 1980, most being from Kanini Sewage Works where they occur at the edges of muddy tanks close to dense cover. I had few records from Itawa until the 1979/1980 rains, when I regularly flushed these cranes from wet grassland, numbers seeming to be much higher here than in previous years. Indeed, my total number of Ndola records for this rains period is remarkably large - some 41 sightings between 11 December 1979 and 11 April 1980. In contrast, Corncrane occurrences at Itawa were no more numerous than in previous years. These observations suggest that wet-habitat Palaearctic cranes may have reached Zambia in greater numbers than usual in this season, possibly due to dry conditions further north (which would presumably not affect Corncranes to the same extent). This would provide some explanation for the unexpected occurrence of the Little Crane.

## REFERENCES

- BRITTON, P.L. (ed.) 1980. *Birds of East Africa*. Nairobi: EANHNS.
- CRAMP, S. & SIMMONS, K.E.L. (eds.) 1980. *The birds of the western Palearctic*. Vol 2. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- GLUTZ von BLOTZHEIM, U.N., BAUER, K.M. & BEZZEL, E. 1973. *Handbuch der Vögel Mitteleuropas*. Vol 5. Frankfurt/Main: Akademische Verlagsgesellschaft.

P.B. Taylor, Box 87336, Mombasa

Received 28 August 1980

*Scopus* 4: 93-95, December 1980

OCCURRENCE OF A BLACK TERN *CHLIDONIAS NIGER* AT DANDORA, KENYA On 12 October 1980, during a visit to the new Dandora Sewage Works, eastern Nairobi, we observed over one of the ponds a somewhat heavy-looking marsh tern which, at close quarters, displayed grey smudges on the sides of the breast. On close examination, including views together with a single White-winged Black Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus*, it became clear that this was a non-breeding plumaged Black Tern *C. niger*.

The upperparts were grey, but less dark than in the juvenile plumage familiar in early autumn in Europe. The diagnostic breast marks, grey rather than blackish, were not readily visible at ranges above 50 m. In addition to the breast marks, the following points of distinction from *C. leucopterus* were noted: the bill was longer; the body size was marginally larger and the wingbeat slower, not speeding up to the extent observed in *leucopterus* when the bird dipped to pick from the water surface; the rump was grey, uniform with the mantle. The hood was similar in extent to that of *leucopterus*, the black through and behind the eye extending broadly across the top of the head.

The bird was also seen by B.S. Meadows (on the same day) and D.A. Turner (on 13th), both of whom agreed with the identification. It was still present on 18 October, when it was observed by DJP and J. Halliday in company with four *leucopterus*.



There are only two previous records of the Black Tern from East Africa, both from Kenya (Britton 1980). A full breeding plumaged specimen labelled 'Kisumu, 30 April 1916' exists in the British Museum (Nat. Hist.) collection, and a bird in winter plumage was observed at Lake Nakuru on 30 September 1953 (Wallace 1975).

## REFERENCES

BRITTON, P.L. (ed.) 1980. *Birds of East Africa*. Nairobi: EANHNS.

WALLACE, D.I.M. 1975. Rare and unusual Palaearctic migrant birds in Central Kenya in 1953. *EANHNS Bulletin* 1975: 24-31.

D.J. Pearson, Department of Biochemistry and A.D. Lewis, Department of Geology,  
Box 30197, Nairobi

Received 30 October 1980

*Scopus* 4: 95-96, December 1980

THE GAMBAGA FLYCATCHER *MUSCICAPA GAMBAGAE* IN NORTHERN KENYA On 5 February 1978, approximately 20 km southwest of the Ura Gate to the Meru National Park, the attention of one of us (DJP) was drawn to a bird which resembled in general appearance and habits a grey Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata*, but which had an arresting, repeated *chik* call, sharper than that of *striata*. The bird, viewed rather high in a large *Acacia*, appeared to have no discernible streaking on the forehead, and little on the breast. The wings appeared to be shorter than in *striata*. A similar bird was seen next day, also in acacias, at Isiolo. Both birds were in very fresh plumage, and were assumed to have been Gambaga Flycatchers *M. gambagae*, a species with which the observer was not familiar.

Much better views were obtained of another of these birds by DJP and ADL at the base of Ololokwe on 18 March 1980. This individual was watched for some time at close range in low acacia scrub, and was identified with confidence as a Gambaga Flycatcher. Again, the bird was in very fresh plumage. The upperparts were brownish grey. The tail and closed primaries were dark, but a prominent pale panel was formed by the edges of the closed secondaries, and pale fringes were visible on the tertials. There was no streaking on the forehead, and only a trace on the upper breast. The tips of the closed wings reached only the base of the tail. In some respects, the bird was rather *Ficedula*-like. Thus, the stance when perched was rather more horizontal, less upright than that typical of *striata*, and the head appeared more rounded, less peaked. DAT saw a bird, perhaps the same individual, at the same site on 7 April, when *striata* were also in the vicinity and better comparisons could be made. Lerata was revisited by DJP and A.E. Butterworth on 9 November 1980. At least three *gambagae* were seen. One viewed at close quarters was apparently an adult. It was much duller and browner looking than the spring birds, with worn flight feathers and no wing panel visible, but with traces of pale fringes still evident on the tertials. Another individual with a trace of mottling on the nape and mantle, pale-tipped wing coverts and unworn flight feathers was assumed to have been a young bird. Finally, also on 9 November, a bird was located by call in a dry river course some 5 km towards Archer's Post.

Jackson (1938) mentions only five records of this species, three from northern Uganda and two from Kenya, from Elgon and near Archer's Post. Apart from juvenile birds netted at night at the lights of Ngulia Lodge during early November 1978 (2) and November 1980 (1), we are not aware of other recent records. The Lerata observations, however, are indicative of breeding at some time between March and September 1979. The species may prove to be not uncommon as a local resident in dry woodland and wooded bushland north and northeast of Mt Kenya.

D.J. Pearson, Department of Biochemistry, A.D. Lewis, Department of Geology,  
Box 30197, Nairobi and D.A. Turner, Box 48019, Nairobi

*Scopus* 4: 96, December, 1980

Received 15 November 1980





Pearson, D J. 1980. "Occurrence of a black tern *Chlidonias niger* at Dandora, Kenya." *Scopus* 4, 95–96.

**View This Item Online:** <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/137798>

**Permalink:** <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/partpdf/118465>

**Holding Institution**

Harvard University, Museum of Comparative Zoology, Ernst Mayr Library

**Sponsored by**

Harvard University, Museum of Comparative Zoology, Ernst Mayr Library

**Copyright & Reuse**

Copyright Status: In copyright. Digitized with the permission of the rights holder.

License: <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/>

Rights: <https://biodiversitylibrary.org/permissions>

This document was created from content at the **Biodiversity Heritage Library**, the world's largest open access digital library for biodiversity literature and archives. Visit BHL at <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org>.