

casqués furent quand ils sont approchés de moins d'une vingtaine de mètres, et les guides du Parc national nous ont dit qu'ils n'avaient jamais auparavant vu ce comportement. Peut-être les oiseaux suivaient-ils un chemin habituel.

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The Parelus bird collection from Ivory Coast at the Field Museum of Natural History, and the first country record of Rufous Cisticola *Cisticola rufus*

Museum collections can play a critical role in unravelling a country's faunistic history. Each specimen creates a scientific, historical record of where and when a bird occurred, from which, among other things, we can learn about changes in land cover and climate, and infer changes in an organism's distribution over time (e.g. Moritz *et al.* 2008). This is especially useful for difficult to identify species.

We report on a collection of birds from Ivory Coast made by D. Parelus between 1964 and 1969, which has been overlooked in previous treatments of the country's avifauna (Thiollay 1985, Dowsett 1993, Dowsett *et al.* 2014). Parelus, the son of American missionaries, lived in Ivory Coast intermittently during this period. After being given a book on preparing bird specimens by Jim Gould, another missionary in

the area, and corresponding with Melvin Traylor, curator of birds at the Field Museum of Natural History (FMNH: Chicago, U.S.A.), he started collecting birds for the museum in 1964. The first part of the collection (339 specimens collected in 1964–5), published by Traylor & Parelius (1967), added 44 species to the country's known avifauna. In total, the Parelius collection comprises 1933 specimens of 297 species, predominantly from the areas around Bouaké, Abidjan and Korhogo. However, while Parelius himself is acknowledged in the first checklist of birds of Ivory Coast (Brunel & Thiollay 1969), his collection was not examined by those authors (J.-M. Thiollay pers. comm.).

We examined the complete list of Parelius specimens as catalogued and compared it to the most recent checklist of the birds of Ivory Coast (Dowsett *et al.* 2014). After accounting for taxonomic discrepancies, we then examined the specimens of the three species in the catalogue that were not included in Dowsett *et al.* (2014): Rufous Cisticola *Cisticola rufus*, Black-bellied Seedcracker *Pyrenestes ostrinus* and Golden-breasted Bunting *Emberiza flaviventris*. We determined that the bunting specimen was actually Cabanis's Bunting *E. cabinisi*, a species already known from Ivory Coast. However, the other two were correctly identified and we include details of those records here.

***Cisticola rufus* Rufous Cisticola.** These specimens represent the only records of the species for Ivory Coast, heretofore unpublished. Distinguishing Rufous Cisticola from the sympatric Short-winged Cisticola *C. brachypterus* is difficult, obscured by variation in the colour of the upperparts. In addition, based on examination of the Parelius specimens and others in the Field Museum's collections, we found the shape of the



Figure 1. Small cisticolas collected in northern Ivory Coast by D. Parelius. The six on the left are *Cisticola rufus*, the only specimens of that species from the country. The five on the right are *C. brachypterus*.

Table 1. FMNH accession numbers and data for the specimens of *Cisticola rufus* collected by D. Parelius in Ivory Coast. The coordinates are modified from the original field notes and from Traylor & Parelius (1969).

Accession number	Locality	Coordinates	Date	Sex
278904	Ferké	9°36'N, 5°12'W	11 Aug 1966	Female
278906	Ferké	9°36'N, 5°12'W	5 Aug 1966	Male
278907	Boundiali	9°32'N, 6°29'W	16 Jul 1966	Male
278908	Ferké	9°36'N, 5°12'W	6 Aug 1966	Female
285844	Boundiali	9°32'N, 6°29'W	12 Aug 1966	Female
285847	Torgokaha	1 km west of Korhogo*	13 Jul 1969	Male

*Coordinates for Korhogo: 9°27'N, 5°39'W

outermost primary, considered diagnostic by Lynes (1930), to be unreliable as an identification criterion. However, Rufous Cisticola is distinguishable by its more rufous upperparts, apparent in side-by-side comparisons, and by the lack of any hint of streaking on the back (Fig. 1). Based on these features, we have identified six specimens, which Parelius collected from three localities in northern Ivory Coast, as Rufous Cisticola (Table 1).

***Pyrenestes ostrinus* Black-bellied Seedcracker.** Four specimens of this widespread estrildid were collected at Port Bouet in March 1967. This taxon is not listed in any checklist of birds of Ivory Coast (e.g. Thiollay 1985, Dowsett 1993, Dowsett *et al.* 2014), perhaps stemming from Brunel & Thiollay's (1969) listing only "*Pyrenestes (ostrinus) sanguineus*", implying that only Crimson Seedcracker *P. sanguineus* was known from the country. This was in spite of an earlier publication by Brunel (1955) stating that he collected nests of both seedcracker species at Bingerville. Regardless, there are several recently published records from the southeast of the country: Grand Bassam (Borrow 2000, Yaokokoré-Béibro *et al.* 2010), Parc National des Iles Ehotilé (Yaokokoré-Béibro 2010) and N'Ganda N'Ganda (Kouadio *et al.* 2014). The Parelius skins may represent the only specimens of this taxon for Ivory Coast.

Not incorporating such distributional data in country checklists can have a residual effect in the literature. For example, Salewski *et al.* (2001) used the range descriptions of Thiollay (1985) as a baseline for detecting latitudinal range shifts in Ivorian birds. However, two of the species listed as potentially having northward range expansions (Blackcap Babbler *Turdoides reinwardtii* and Black-necked Weaver *Ploceus nigricollis*) would have been omitted had Thiollay (1985) incorporated the Parelius collection in his paper. In this case, this is not a serious error: indeed it would have served to strengthen the conclusion of Salewski *et al.* (2001).

This paper is not an exhaustive review of the Parelius collection. Its data are freely available in online museum collection databases (e.g. VertNet, ORNIS). We encourage researchers interested in bird distributions in the Ivory Coast and West Africa in general to incorporate this valuable collection into future studies.

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