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Tadorna ferruginea Breeding South of the Sahara

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Page(s): Page 56, Page 57, Page 58, Page 59

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not included in the avifauna of Sudan by Cave & Macdonald (1955). Bailey (1968) saw fair numbers of both adults and immatures between the Seychelles and East Africa in September and October, though most of his records were near breeding stations to the north and east of Madagascar. Away from Latham Island, Tanzania, where both *S. leucogaster* and *S. dactylatra* breed (Parker 1970), boobies are uncommon in East Africa. I know of no inshore records in Kenya, where most reports are the casual observations of anglers who cannot be expected to identify the immature birds which form the majority of sightings. All western Indian Ocean nesting sites lie to the southeast of Kenya, so that wandering immatures may reach East African waters regularly during the southeast monsoon.

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First known breeding of the Ruddy Shelduck *Tadorna ferruginea* south of the Sahara

by J. S. Ash

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In April 1975, accompanied by my wife and daughter, I travelled over the Saneti Plateau in the Bale Mountains of southern Ethiopia. This is a remote and beautiful area lying between 3800 and 4377 m, averaging about 4140 m (Waltermire 1975). Typically the vegetation is afro-alpine between these altitudes, and in this area is above the *Erica arborea* zone. There are many small tarns, most of which do not seem to have been mapped, scattered about the plateau, but many are grouped around 6°51'N, 39°49'E (the latest map names this mountain Sante Ye'Terara Ch'ae).

Many of the tarns held a pair of Ruddy Shelduck *Tadorna ferruginea*, which were apparently fairly common in the area, most of them paired or single. On the larger lake of some 75 hectares, which I shall call Lake Deemtu (3890 m), there were at least 52 ducks present on 6 April. Such large numbers

of this species are quite unprecedented in Ethiopia (see below), and the date is late for Palaearctic migrants: breeding seemed possible, and although the birds' behaviour – the attachment of pairs to particular restricted areas and their vociferous reaction to our arrival – gave support to this, we were unable to obtain any direct evidence.

Dr. S. J. Tyler visited the area 3 weeks later in May 1975, and especially looked for signs of breeding. She did not reach Lake Deemtu, but found many pairs on some of the smaller tarns, and recorded behaviour similar to that we had seen a month earlier (Anon 1975). Mr. T. Fison, a non-ornithologist, trekked over the area on mule-back a year later in May 1976. Following my description of the birds, he made a point of looking out for them, and recorded about 7 pairs on the tarns he passed; he did not visit Lake Deemtu.

I revisited the area, 21–23 June 1976, with my wife and Dr. and Mrs. V. H. Lee. We found 4 pairs and 3 single birds on about ten of the smaller tarns we examined, but we put our main effort into reaching Lake Deemtu, which can be reached from a high point to the east in about an hour's walk on a compass bearing. On 22 June there were at least 46 adult Ruddy Shelduck present, mostly in ones, twos and threes, and with them three broods of young. The oldest brood consisted of two ducklings judged to be 3–4 weeks old, the next had five young about 2 weeks old, and the third had ten young 7–10 days old. On our approaching a brood, the adult – we never saw more than one adult with a brood – promptly abandoned its young and flew off for a considerable distance without showing undue distress. When we left the lake after about an hour both the larger broods could be seen, each with an attendant parent.

Lake Deemtu is roughly circular, about a kilometre in diameter, but with a small southerly extension. There are several small rocky islets, two of which have some vegetation including several Giant Lobelias *Lobelia rhyncopetalum*, and at the northwest edge a stretch of stone cliffs reaching to about 45 m. All the smaller tarns seem to lack the islets and cliffs, although one other, apparently named Garba Guracha, at about 6°53'N, 39°52'E, visited by Fison, and with duck on it, was surrounded by stone cliffs on three sides.

On my first visit, 6 April 1975, there were large numbers of waterfowl and wetland birds of 17 species on Lake Deemtu, as well as 12 characteristic landbird species in the immediate area, and at a slightly lower altitude 7 additional species (see Appendix). The list includes, astonishingly, over half of Ethiopia's endemic species of birds in this small area, and in addition there are several particularly interesting endemic mammals such as the Simien Fox *Canis simensis* and Mountain Nyala *Tragelaphus buxtoni*. It is therefore gratifying that the Saneti Plateau is included in the proposed Bale Mountains National Park.

Urban & Brown (1971) describe Ruddy Shelducks as Palaearctic migrants Sep–Mar, throughout the country at above 2000 m, uncommon to rare on larger freshwater lakes and rivers, alkaline lakes and highland streams and marshes up to 3700 m. They further classify this montane habitat as: a) Giant Lobelia – *Alchemilla* – tussock grass moorland, at 3800–4100 m, and b) Giant heath (*Erica*) moorland at 3500–3800 m. The birds we saw on the Saneti Plateau were all above 3800 m, but we described the habitat as open *Heli-chrysum* scrub with Giant Lobelia patches, i.e., the "paramo belt" of Lind &

Morrison (1974). Moreau (1972) states that this shelduck is resident in southern Spain and the Maghreb, but that in its main range from the Aegean eastwards to Amurland, it is largely migratory, most going to southern Asia, though in the Sudan it is listed as common north of Khartum; he also states that a very few have recently been found in Abyssinia.

With the discovery of a breeding population in Ethiopia, there must now be doubt as to whether other records within the country refer, as assumed up to now, to Palaearctic migrants. Table 1 lists all the records I have been able to trace.

TABLE 1
Occurrences of *Tadorna ferruginea* in Ethiopia

Date	Locality	Co-ordinates	Altitude (m)	Nos.	Authority
17 Dec 1904	Asmara	15.20N, 38.55E	2300	1	Dal-Fiume 1907
?	Angua Mesh†	?	?	?	Moltoni & Ruscone 1944
10 Aug 1965	Lake Abiata	7.40N, 38.35E	1573	2	Urban 1971
12 Feb 1966	Upper Ueb*	6.51N, 39.32E	3455	Sev. prs.	L. H. Brown
8 & 22 Oct 1967	Gefersa	9.03N, 38.40E	2605	1	Urban 1971
Feb 1967	nr. Dinshu*	7.05N, 39.45E	3000	1	Urban 1971
early Apr 1968	nr. Dinshu*	7.05N, 39.45E	3000	1	Urban 1971
1966-1969	Dubte	11.43N, 41.00E	380	Rare	Hill <i>et al.</i> 1970
13 Jan 1969	Akaki	8.50N, 38.44E	3070	2	E. K. Urban
9 Nov 1969	Akaki	8.50N, 38.44E	3070	1	Ash
post-1969	Upper Ueb*	6.51N, 39.32E	3660	?	Waltermire 1975
24 Jan 1970	Akaki	8.50N, 38.44E	3070	2	Moore 1970
7 & 9 Feb 1975	Bahadu	10.15N, 40.28E	530	2	Ash
6 Apr 1975	Saneti Plateau*	See text	See text	67+	Ash
10 May 1975	nr. Mt. Gaysay*	7.12N, 39.45E	3040	2	Ash
10 May 1975	Saneti Plateau*	See text	See text	Many	Anon 1975
May 1976	Saneti Plateau*	See text	See text	14±2	T. Fison
21-22 Jun 1976	Saneti Plateau*	See text	See text	57+	Ash

* All these observations are in the same general area of the Bale Mountains and are within the proposed National Park.

† Moltoni & Ruscone (1944) refer to this locality as "Angua Mesh presso il Monte Erer", which I am unable to trace. Italian maps of this period show only one Mt. Erer at 03° 52' N, 39° 46' E, close to the Kenya border, but this seems unlikely habitat for any duck. Urban (1971) does not refer to this record, but does include Dal-Fiume's (1907) from Asmara.

The records based on the Bale Mountains, in February and April to June, include the breeding population, which is presumably a resident population restricted to this small area of open plain and scattered tarns lying to the northeast of Lake Deemt. Other records in the same neighbourhood, such as those at Dinshu and Gaysay in February, April and May are presumably local wanderers from this population, which may indeed be larger and more widespread, since Waltermire (1975) reports shelducks from the upper Ueb, as also does Urban (1971), though without indicating numbers. The map in Waltermire's paper shows several tarns around 6° 51' N, 39° 32' E, apparently a habitat similar to the Saneti Plateau and thus suitable for shelduck.

The remaining records comprise at least 11 individuals in scattered localities between 10 August and 9 February. These may well be Palaearctic migrants, but equally well may be wanderers from the Bale Mountains.

The fact that this species was not recorded from the Bale Mountains before 1967 does not imply that a new population had established itself there. This part of Ethiopia is very difficult to travel in and there must have been very few visitors prior to that time. The spate of new records in other parts of the country could be credited to a new population in Bale, but they are just as likely to have been due to the influx of keen observers about that time and to the formation of a local wildlife society. Another area which needs to be watched for possible breeding is the Gefersa/Akaki region which resembles the habitat of this species in Morocco, though it is very different from the Bale Mountain habitat.

The population of *Tadorna ferruginea* in the Saneti Plateau area is probably about 30–35 pairs, but with other suitable habitat known to exist in this poorly explored country, there may be twice this number. A thorough search of the area, preferably in May or June would be very rewarding.

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APPENDIX

Birds seen in April 1975 and June 1976 at Lale Deemtu, Ethiopia, 3890 m a.s.l.

On 6 April 1975 large numbers of wildfowl were present, including Teal *Anas crecca* 2, Yellow-billed Duck *A. undulata* 7, Pintail *A. acuta* 200, Garganey *A. querquedula* 1, Shoveler *A. clypeata* 250. Other wetland species there or in the immediate area (* = endemic to Ethiopia) included Little Grebe *Podiceps ruficollis*, Wattled Ibis *Bostrychia carunculata**, Blue-winged Goose *Cyanochen cyonoptera**, Wattled Crane *Grus carunculatus*, Rouget's Rail *Rallus rougetii**, Spot-breasted Plover *Vanellus melanocephalus**, Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*, Common Sandpiper *T. hypoleucos* and Little Stint *Calidris minuta*.

In June 1976, there were 2 Shovelers still present, as well as Black Duck *A. sparsa* 2, Wigeon *A. penelope* 6 and Crested Coot *Fulica cristata* 4. Characteristic land birds seen in the immediate vicinity included Lanner Falcon *Falco biarmicus*, Grey-wing Francolin *Francolinus psilolaemus*, Chestnut-naped Francolin *F. castaneicollis*, White-collared Pigeon *Columba albitorques**, Short-crested Lark *Galerida malabarica*, Pale Crag Martin *Hirundo fuligula arabica*, Red-throated Pipit *Anthus cervinus*, Abyssinian Longclaw *Macronyx flavicollis**, Hill Chat *Cercomela sordida*, Black-headed Siskin *Serinus nigriceps**, Slender-billed Chestnut-winged Starling *Onychognathus tenuirostris* and Chough *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax*.

In addition to the 7 endemics listed above 7 others occur in the same area at a slightly lower altitude: Yellow-fronted Parrot *Poicephalus flavifrons**, Black-winged Lovebird *Agapornis taranta**, Golden-backed Woodpecker *Dendropicos abyssinicus**, Abyssinian Catbird *Parophasma galinieri**, White-backed Black Tit *Parus leuconotus**, Black-headed Forest Oriole *Oriolus monacha** and Thick-billed Raven *Corvus crassirostris**.

Thus over half of Ethiopia's endemic species of birds can be found in this relatively small area.

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