

Comprehensive Check list Birds of Mafia island group

Birds of the Mafia Archipelago
by Dudley B. Iles B.Sc.

INTRODUCTION

During the last twenty years, there has been a steady increase in numbers of Europeans and Americans spending their vacations in Africa. Amongst the usual reasons for taking holidays, many tourists have an underlying curiosity to experience the colourful history, culture and exceptional natural history of the continent. The countries of Kenya and Tanzania not only provide game parks but an exceptionally varied coast and off shore islands with a long human history and a less well known natural history.

Whilst the northern Tanzanian islands of Zanzibar are better documented as regards their natural history, the Mafia islands, about 90 miles to the south, are much less known.

Tourists have only recently discovered Mafia, encouraged by the establishment of the attractive and modern Kinasi Lodge. Inevitably, diving, snorkelling and other water sports have been the main attractions for visitors. The impact of the growing human population on the local fishing community and the wild life has been under consideration with the establishment of a marine park based on the extensive and beautiful Chole bay. Studies of the bay are clearly indicating that it and its surrounding island shores are important for the considerable numbers of off-breeding shore birds which visit this region. As well as resident breeding species, all are directly or indirectly dependant for food on the rich marine animal life, as are the local human communities which surround the islands' coast.

During the occupation of Mafia by Germany, the island was visited briefly by ornithologists with the emphasis on specimen collecting, notably Von der Decken (1870), and Voeltzkow who visited the island for a few weeks in 1908 and 1923, and by Baumann (1896) a geologist who made passing reference to the natural history.

Sporadic collecting was undertaken during the early British occupation. King(1917) and N.R. Fuggles-Couchman (1936) spent two days on Mafia collecting and making observations. With contributions from G. S. Brown of the Agricultural Department on Mafia, and District Administrators, notably Darling and Piggott. R. E Moreau was able to bring together the known Ornithological records of Mafia in the 1940s. More recently there have been contributions from Ornithologists known to those of us familiar with the current text books on East African birds.

In association with Frontier expeditions, C.O.F. Mlingwa and C.A. Msuya from the Department of Zoology at Dar-es-Salaam University, made a 10 day study on Mafia , one in May and another in November 1992. There has been a number of expeditions by Frontier largely to study the marine environment but also to make contributions to the avifauna. Tourists have also left their records with Kinasi Lodge or with the World Wildlife Fund office at Utende. Thus our knowledge of the Mafia avifauna has been limited, but has slowly built up from short visits by Europeans and through the knowledge of local people. There is still

Comprehensive Check list Birds of Mafia island group

more to learn about the distribution, movements and behaviour of Mafia birds and perhaps other species to be recorded. The visitor to Mafia can make a greater contribution to our knowledge of the natural history than they would in similar circumstances in Europe.

To begin to understand the birds of Mafia a brief look at its geography and its vegetation is of interest.

The Mafia group of islands lies 8° south of the Equator in the Indian Ocean, roughly 15 kilometres, east of the Rufiji river delta on the mainland of Tanzania. Between is a shallow channel with small islands and reefs, an important trading route along the African coast. The main island of Mafia is some 40 kilometres from north to south and 16 kilometres from east to west at its widest; a little over half the size of Unguja (Known to most tourists as 'Zanzibar'). To the south east are the smaller islands of Chole, Juani, and Jibondo associated with many coral islets and sand bars. They separate the shallow Chole bay from the sea and are often connected at low spring tides. The Mafia islands are composed mainly of coral rag and sandy sediment never more than 60 metres in height.

The human population is smaller than Zanzibar, many living in or round Kilindoni, the present day district capital. Most live in small villages or on scattered farms (shambas) in the traditional manner. Over the years much of the natural vegetation has been cleared for cultivation, some being allowed to return to secondary bush from time to time. Coconut plantations dominate the landscape but there is also extensive cultivation of cashew trees, bananas, cassava and maize. On Chole Island, oranges, limes and many other exotic fruit are also grown.

The natural vegetation and its corresponding animal life, like many regions of the tropics, is under pressure from cultivation. Shifting agriculture has changed much of the landscape. Mangroves are cut for building timbers and firewood and the remaining natural forests are isolated and growing smaller all the time. As the visitor walks along the forest paths, he or she often breaks out into small fields of maize recently cut out of the woodland. The few remaining forest patches ought to be declared reserves and encroachment stopped before they become too small to support some of the forest wildlife. If tourism can be made to benefit the local people through the issue of permits and the training of guides, perhaps the future of these forest patches can be assured.

Botanical studies by Greenaway (1938) Pratt, Greenaway and Gwynne (1966) and Rogers (1988) recognised eight major habitats on Mafia.

Distribution of the resident bird populations can be associated with these habitat-vegetation types:

- 1 Ocean
- 2 Inter-tidal mud flats and beaches
- 3 Coastal thickets
- 4 Cultivated and built-up areas
- 5 Swamps and ponds

Comprehensive Check list Birds of Mafia island group

- 6 Grassland
- 7 Mangroves
- 8 Coastal forest

It seems reasonable to begin a survey of Mafia's birds around Chole Bay, where most visitors begin their holiday. They are driven from the informal airport in Kilindoni along one of the two main dust roads of Mafia, to the lodges overlooking one of the most unspoilt and biologically interesting bays in Tanzania.

Chole Bay, protected from the ocean to the east by a group of small islands and islets, is extremely shallow for the most part and bordered by mangrove swamps and sandy beaches. At low tide vast areas of the southern end of the bay are exposed to reveal soft silts and sand with coral rock platforms and pools rich in marine invertebrates.

'Shore birds', as the Americans call them, or waders (the term used in Europe and Africa) are small- to medium-sized long-legged birds. Many spend their breeding season by rivers and on marshes in the far north of Eurasia whilst other species prefer the lake edges of more central and southern regions. They are long-distance fliers, and after breeding, many travel thousands of kilometres across sea and land, to more favourable regions of the world. Many waders pass through Eastern Europe, to arrive on the east coast of Africa. Some continue to the Cape in South Africa where, after a few months, they return once more.

Chole Bay provides a temporary resting and feeding station for many waders continuing further south, whilst others may spend all their winter here. Between September and April birds can be seen busily feeding amongst the pools at low tide where they select worms, shellfish, crustaceans and even small fish. Each species is adapted in bill length, length of leg and in size to allow maximum efficiency for collecting food but with little competition between species.

As the tide advances, mixed parties become more concentrated along the upper shore. As each approaching high tide covers their food, flocks can be seen flying, over the incoming water, towards the mangrove swamps and rocky islets to the north and east of the bay where they safely rest and preen until the water begins to recede once more.

Whimbrel, with their long curved bills, Grey Plover, lacking their summer black bellies, are perhaps the commonest waders; Ringed Plover, Curlew Sandpipers, Little Stint and Greenshank make up the numbers from the far north. There are other waders less familiar to the ornithologist from Western Europe; Greater Sand Plovers which breed from Jordan to central Asia, and Terek Sandpipers, their up curved bills appearing out of proportion to their dumpy bodies.

One of the most interesting waders is the striking black and white Crab Plovers. These heavy billed birds breed on sandy shores along the Persian Gulf and Somalia spending their off-season on the sand and mud shores of East Africa as far south as Mozambique. The successful breeding pairs are accompanied by their single smoky grey and white offspring. Chole Bay is an important feeding area for these birds. One of the most beautiful sights of

Comprehensive Check list Birds of Mafia island group

Mafia is the high tide flights of Crab Plovers making their way low across the water to the sanctuary of the mangroves there to await the turning of the tide. Although most of these waders return north, a few, perhaps injured or immature birds remain through the year.

Many of the herons seen on the Mafia shores are resident. Small solitary Green-backed Herons with orange yellow legs are often disturbed from the rock pools. But by far the commonest is the larger all-white or mouse grey heron with dark legs and yellow/orange feet. There are intermediates between these extremes indicating that they are of the same species, hence the now recognised name of Dimorphic Heron, related closely to the Western Reef heron. A third smaller white heron is rarely found on Chole Bay shores but spends its time foraging for large insects and frogs disturbed by the feet of cattle as they graze on Mafia's grasslands. These Cattle Egrets take to the air at dusk and fly across the water to offshore islands to roost. One large roost is located in the mangroves off the northern tip of Chole Island. Here in the non-breeding season up to 300 Cattle Egrets and 250 Dimorphic Herons arrive at the same time as 1000 or more fruit bats leave their day roosts on Chole, to feed on the fruit trees of Mafia. Occasionally Black Heron, Night Herons or even a Madagascar Squacco Heron joins the roost. Towards the end of the year and the beginning of the next, Bee-eaters also use the mangroves as a roost with as many as 600 birds present in January.

North of Chole, at the entrance to the bay and between Juani and Jibondo islands are several coral rock islets, each shaped little gigantic mushrooms by wave action, whilst the tops have been harshly sculptured by wind and rain into razor sharp ridges and gullies. Some of these islets play host to breeding colonies of Dimorphic Herons and Cattle Egrets, shared with a few Long-tailed Cormorants, Green-backed Herons and Red-eyed Doves, their nests scattered amongst the cactus-like Euphorbias safe from rat and man. The Cattle Egrets need to travel across plantations and sea to supply their young with regurgitated food. The islets are also favourite vantage points for the resident Fish Eagle and the occasional wintering Osprey.

The islands of Chole, Juani and Jibondo reflect Mafia's avifauna but with one or two curiosities. Jibondo might still support a small colony of Goliath herons in low trees along the edge of a coral cliff. Juani and Chole have breeding populations of Laughing Doves. It is thought they may have been introduced there some time in the past (Mackworth-Praed and Grant 1960). Occasionally parties of Greater Flamingos present themselves on offshore sand bars at Jibondo, during their movements to a salt lake west of Lindi.

Across the Bay, on the main island of Mafia, the shore is once more extensively protected by mangroves. The sandy cliffs of the old beach support a small breeding colony of Pied Kingfishers before passing inland near Kinasi Lodge. Between the cliff and the mangroves are coastal bush, cultivated fields and marshy grassland. Scattered throughout are coconut palms and cashew trees. A walk between the mangroves and the bush reveals many of the typical resident birds of Mafia. Noisy family parties of Scimitar-bills move between the two. Families of Collared Sunbirds forage in the mangrove leaves searching for spiders and insects; Black-backed Puffbacks are common, the males seen in stiff winged display flight above the mangroves exhibiting their puffed-up white rump feathers. Hidden in deep bush, wall eyed Sombre Greenbuls sing their warbling song. Along the shore Hadada Ibis stand like sentinels on the top of leafless palm trees where occasionally Broad-billed Rollers can be

Comprehensive Check list Birds of Mafia island group

seen. Watch for pairs of Water Dikkop, much like European Stone Curlew, or a silently-rising Gabon Nightjar, along the quieter sandy beaches.

Mangroves and open bush are favourite winter habitats for Spotted Flycatchers, darting out from a favourite branch to capture a passing insect before returning to the same perch. Orioles, bright yellow males and discretely green immatures and females favour the mangroves. The males often briefly uttering their rich warble in the early morning. Madagascar Bee-eaters are resident breeding birds but are joined by similar Blue-cheeked Bee-eaters in their off-season.

Inland, palm plantations with scattered houses line the roads and paths. High in the palms, often above a house, colonies of Black-headed Weavers hang their nests from the underside of the large feathery leaves. The colony is regularly visited throughout the year and always with high activity, a steady stream of birds carrying strings of grass to weave into their nest, whilst displaying males hang with fluttering wings. Many of these colonies have been in use for several bird generations.

Palm Swifts are the most widespread swift of Mafia. The simple nest is built of feathers held together with saliva suspended precariously and vertically along a palm frond. The two eggs are incubated with the bird in a vertical position.

Telegraph poles and wires are frequently used by birds in various ways, as vantage perches from which to hawk after passing insects or to watch for those crawling below, for advertising territory or simply to rest and preen. The telephone wires from Kilindoni to Utende are no exception and give the recently arrived visitor their first sightings of some of Mafia's commoner birds. Striped Kingfishers and Lilac-breasted Rollers hunt for ground insects below, the latter also perform their spectacular display flights before returning to their chosen pole. Male Fan-tailed Widowbirds set up their territories from the nearby wire, Bee-eaters hawk for flies in small groups, and Striped Swallows just rest between energetic feeding flights.

Kilindoni is the only town on Mafia. It is spacious with a variety of habitats well worth checking on a visit or whilst waiting for your flight to Dar-es Salaam. Overhead Black Kites and Pied Crows are constantly scavenging or soaring over the remnant forest close to the airport. Little swifts are resident but during changeable off season weather conditions, Eurasian Common Swifts may suddenly appear flying ahead of the storm.

Mafia airport, unlike more formal ones, permits the visitor to walk around the airstrip. Richard's Pipits, Yellow Wagtails, Northern Wheatears and Zitting Cisticola are to be looked for. Near by, and close to the town, is a shallow lagoon, mostly dry in the middle months of the year, but reed fringed in the wet season. Here Jacana breed and often visited by parties of White-faced Whistling Duck and the diminutive pigmy goose before being disturbed by local children.

Much of the roadside, from Kilidoni to Utende, is grassland with scattered bushes, resembling the Savannah of the mainland coast. During monsoon periods they may become

Comprehensive Check list Birds of Mafia island group

flooded for many weeks. Zitting Cisticolas are often the only bird present in the dry season. These small warblers with their monotonous flight song are the most widespread of the Cisticolas being found in southern Asia, Australia and southern Europe. Cattle feeding in Mafia's grasslands attract white Cattle Egrets, often showing fawn crowns and backs, an indication of breeding condition. In wetter times Fan-tailed Widowbirds display over the tall grass and neat black and white male Pin-tail Whydahs perform their jerky aerial displays with trailing tails. The trilling call of Water Dikkop is a common night sound particularly where open water is to be found.

Scattered throughout Mafia are permanent pools often surrounded by reeds and covered with the floating leaves of purple water lilies. Some were artificially produced when the dirt road to the north was built. The larger ones contain dead trees, drowned by the water, on which Egrets, Malachite Kingfishers, Lilac-breasted Rollers and even Darters perch from time to time. Some are surrounded by tree heath (*Philippia mafiensis*) whilst others open on to grassland. Visits to these pools are most productive just before dusk when shyer water birds are likely to feed outside the reed cover. Typical resident species are Jacana, Black Crake, Allen's Gallinule and White-faced Whistling Duck, by far the commonest duck on Mafia. During the non-breeding season for northern migrants, Purple Herons, Grey Herons, and Wood Sandpipers frequent suitable margins. Many of these pools are rarely visited by ornithologists because of their inaccessibility and may yet have surprises.

On the east coast, north from the northern arm of Chole Bay to Ras Mkumbi the coast line is largely composed of wave- and wind- eroded cliffs and platforms. The cliff top is a narrow strip of short grassland with scattered bushes often pruned by wind and spray, in places almost impenetrable coastal bush. Apart from the resident species, this coastline is ideal for observing migration. Its position in relation to the mainland puts it close to the natural coastal migration route of East Africa. The variety of vegetation provides shelter and feeding for migrants.

Scattered parties of waders rest and feed by the side of the rock pools below the cliffs or at the margins of pools along the cliff edge; Pipits (including two Red-throated Pipits on one occasion) feed with Yellow Wagtails in the short grass. Red-backed shrike and Spotted Flycatchers hunt for insects from the bushes. Occasional breeding Senegal Plovers, passing Ospreys, and terns frequent the cliff edge. Though hard to reach, this is an area capable of providing exciting bird watching through much of the year.

Patches of original coastal evergreen forest still remain though much reduced since the days of Bauman's visit (Voeltzkow 1923). Although the human population is smaller than Zanzibar's, there has been a steady encroachment of Mafia's remaining forest areas where there is suitable ground for cultivation. Many of the remaining trees are of medium size growing on coral rag, and the undergrowth is often dense thickets of woody climbers and shrubs. The visitor may explore by using the villager's well-worn paths often leading to clearings. There are occasional small swampy stream which winds its way through the forest to the shore. Small patches of forest remain in Kilindoni, Chunguruma, Mlola, stretching north along the east coast and near to Kanga-Ngome in the remoter north of the island. These are all that is left of what must have been extensive coastal forests perhaps separated by

Comprehensive Check list Birds of Mafia island group

natural grassland and heath land. Although likely to be restricted in their avifauna because of their island status and reduced size, these forest patches have recently produced interesting bird records.

At bush level, Little Greenbul have been recorded in all forest patches, Eastern Bearded Scrub Robin in Mlola, and Red-capped Robinchats appear widespread if difficult to see. Camaropteras and Olive Sunbirds are common. Green Pigeons and occasionally Tambourine Dove can be seen in most forest areas as indeed in coastal bush. Mixed 'waves' of small birds in the canopy may include Golden-rumped Tinkerbirds, Black-throated Wattle-eyes and Collared Sunbirds. Black Cuckoo Shrikes have been recorded within Kilnidoni forest. Msuya and Mlingwa recorded Livingstone's Turaco in 1990 and 1992, Crowned Hornbill during the November Frontier expedition of 1992, and Narina's Trogons, all within the bounds of the Mlola forest. Pygmy Kingfishers are known and are more likely to be caught in mist nets stretched across a forest path than seen. Although resident in East African coastal forests their numbers may be enhanced by migrants from the south.

As the forest merges into plantations or grassland or bush, other species forage along the forest edge, notably parties of non-breeding weavers, mannikins, coucals and doves. Streams pass through cultivated fields and forest before weaving their way through mangroves or sandy estuaries to the sea. Within the Mlora forest the smaller herons forage along the stream banks. Malachite and occasionally, Mangrove Kingfishers can be seen especially nearer the shore. In the northern winter, the ubiquitous Common Sandpiper is nearly always present. Perhaps unexpectedly, bat-like Bohm's Spinetail hawk over these quiet streams.

The continual enjoyment of Mafia's diverse natural history by tourists and local people alike will depend, in the future, on the protection and management of the more delicate habitats, particularly the remaining forest and coastal regions. The work of the African World Wildlife Fund, local entrepreneurs and residents are vital to preserving the beauty and prosperity of Mafia

Acknowledgements

I am indebted to Peter Byrne for his help, enthusiasm and support, the inhabitants of Chole Island whose hospitality and cheerful hard work made my stay on Chole memorable, and to the staff of Kinsasi lodge whose advice and experience I valued. To John Bateman and Kathryn Belk for their editing and to Neil Baker for his comments on Mafia's avifauna.

References.

Moreau Reg (1938) *Bulletin British Ornithologist's Club* **58; 64**

Moreau Reg (1940) Ornithology of the East African Islands. *Ibis* **1940 6-89.**

Moreau Reg (1943) Additions to the Ornithology of the Mafia group of islands *Ibis* **1944 33-37**

Comprehensive Check list Birds of Mafia island group

Msuya Charles A. & Mlingwa Charles O. F. (1992) Bird study on Mafia island, Tanzania pt.1 *A report of May 1992 Expedition.*

Msuya Charles A. & Mlingwa Charles O.F. (1994) Bird study on Mafia island pt 2
A report of the WCST/ Frontier-sponsored expedition on Mafia Island
10-20 November 1992.

Iles D. B. (1998) Brief bird notes from Mafia and Chole (islands) June -July 1996 and
January-February 1997.

Iles D. B. (1998) Bird notes largely collected around Kinazi Lodge, Mafia with records from
elsewhere on Mafia 6-16 February 1998 .

Report Development of the Mafia Island Marine Park after 1996.

Mackwoth-Praed C. W. and Grant C.H.B. (1955) *Birds of Eastern and North Eastern
Africa: vol. 1 and 11.* Longman.

Urban, Fry & Keith.(1993) *The Birds of Africa vol. 1-5* Academic press.

PREFACE

Mr. R. E. Moreau, as well as making his own contributions, was one of the earlier Ornithologist to summarise the observations of others visiting Mafia (including the African collector mentioned in the check list), some of which made only casual comments, on the avifauna.

His experience led him to writes in his paper ‘ Ornithology of the East African islands’ (1940) ‘It suffices here to point out that although geologically Mafia was separated from the mainland in very recent times , and the existing strait is less than 20 miles in width broken by an islet in the middle, the Mafian avifauna is to a surprising degree poorer than that of the opposite mainland. Even though the general aspect of the vegetation is so similar, and is to all appearances equally capable of supporting them, the Parrot, Turaco, Hornbill, Coly, Woodpecker, Honeyguide, Broadbill, Lark , Babbler ,Helmet-shrike, Tit, Drongo, and White-eye families are absent’

Comprehensive Check list Birds of Mafia island group

He continues---' On the positive side Mafia has little to show. There are apparently no endemic forms and no resident birds belonging to non-African species. No palaeartic birds figure in the systematic list but this is of no significance, because the Collector (from Amani) was not working in the islands during the northern winter'.

Recent observations have verified many of his comments with the exception of Turaco, and Hornbill. Palearctic visitors are widespread in the northern winter months as he suspected. I have attempted to follow his example by summarising his work and the more recent records made by local and visiting observers including myself. It is likely that some records have been misplaced and certainly I have not found it easy to locate some of the more formal papers written on Mafia's birds. For these reasons, any records I missed, I make my apologies'.

Many Ornithologists exploring country where there were few records and before the wide availability of modern optics, collected specimens for detail examination and as scientific evidence of their observations. I have not included below the details of the specimens mentioned in Moreau's paper as they are of less relevance to the casual visitor. Most of these were collected by 'the African collector from Amani', who remains anonymous and who accompanied Mr. P.J.Greenway on a botanical survey, besides working on the avifauna of Mafia in 1937 and 1938. Clearly a knowledgeable field naturalist.

(M&M) frequently occurring in the check list below are the initials of C.O.F.Mlingwa and C.A. Msuya from the Zoology department of Dar-es-Salaam University and who wrote the reports on Frontier's two 10 day expeditions in 1992 referred to in the 'Birds of Mafia' introduction.

G. & M. Richmond 'People's Trust for endangered Species' were working on a marine survey 1990 and recorded about 58 bird species some of which are referred to below (Richmond)

THE CHECKLIST OF BIRDS OF THE MAFIA ACHIPELAGO

Giant Petrel *Macronectes giganteus*

Notes and the specimen of a bird acquired by Mafia's District Officer was sent to Piggott-(Darling and Piggott prior 1941; Moreau 9th march 1943)

Little Grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*

The only record of this species - May 1992 (M&M) possibly from one of the small permanent ponds north of Kilindoni.

Long-tailed Cormorant *Phalacrocorax africanus*

Generally regarded as a common and widespread species on Mafia though not recorded on either of the Frontier expeditions. Recorded from tidal and fresh water habitats in small numbers. At least 3 birds were observed on nests on the edge of the heronery on the coral rag

Comprehensive Check list Birds of Mafia island group

islet south west of Jina island, Chole Bay. The nests were in Euphobias and there appeared to be others in the impenetrable centre of the islet, 10th February 1998. Although no signs of breeding, 20 or more individuals were on the same island in June and July 1996 (D.B.I). Other possible nesting sites were the Makweche islets ,west of Juani island.

African Darter *Anhinga rufa*

Moreau records two pairs on a freshwater pool March 1943.

21 birds were recorded in brackish water swamps, Mlola.

4 at Chunguruma in freshwater ponds/swamps, November 1992 (M& M).

Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus* .

A male was disturbed from a reed fringed pool near Ndagoi, 7 February 1999 (D.B.I).

Black-crowned Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax*

Occasionally recorded from swamps and mangroves-- A total of 5 in a swamp- Chunguruma November 1992 and recorded from Makweche islets May 1992. (M&M)
2 in the mangrove heron roost , Chole island, most of July 1998 (D.B.I).

Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides*

‘Sight records by the African collector’ (Moreau 1940)

Recorded from Kiringwe and Jimboni in freshwater swamps, May 1992 (M&M).

1 in a swamp Kiruni, 8 February 1998 (D.B.I).

Madagascar Squacco Heron *A. idae*

Single birds recorded at ,May 1992 (M&M) and from the heron roost, Chole on several occasions in July 1998 (D.B.I).

Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis*

Sight records by Fuggles-Couchman.

Greenaway and the African collector. ‘Sometimes solitary, usually in pairs or in flocks frequenting donkeys or cattle(Greenaway via Moreau) .

Commonly seen, through the day, on cultivated land or grassland. Evening and morning flights of small parties, are frequently seen in association with offshore islands or mangroves. Cattle Egrets made up a considerable part of the Mangrove heron roost on Chole. Peak numbers of approximately 300 birds, were reached in July 1998. Numbers were reduced considerably coinciding with breeding on near by islets in January and February 1997.

Approximately 50 pairs bred in the mixed colony on the islet west of Jina island, Chole Bay, February 1998 ,when fledged young were seen. However nesting seems to be erratic from year to year. There was no signs of breeding on this islet in January 1999

Comprehensive Check list Birds of Mafia island group

Breeding may also occur on the Makweche islets west of Juani and on small islets on the west coast of Mafia.

Green-backed Heron *Butorides striatus*

Common in or near mangroves, particularly at low tide. Recorded by all observers. Rarely more than in ones or twos.

A nest was seen on the rocks on the islet west of Jina Chole Bay, February 1998 (D.B.I)

Black Heron *Egretta ardesiaca*

A frequently seen species along the Chole Bay shores at low tide from November to February but no sightings so far in May, June or July. Usually seen in small groups of up to 5 birds but 20-30 were frequently counted in January 1999, with a maximum of 45 on 25 January. Similar counts in 2000 (D.B.I) May be increasing in numbers. Approximately 300 birds were thought to be around Chole bay in January 2002.

3 birds were also seen in the heron/egret colony on the islet in Kinasi pass but there was no signs of breeding.(D.B.I.)

Dimorphic Heron *E. dimorpha*

The commonest 'shore' heron with the white and grey morphs more or less equal in numbers. Up to 250 individuals were counted in the Chole heron roost, January to February 1997 with fewer represented in June/July 1996. Most arrived at the roost from Mafia, low across the bay, with fewer from the east. This roost appeared to have become 'extinct' in October 1998 possibly due to an increase in human disturbance.

Frontier studied a breeding colony of about 100 nests on Makweche islets west of Juani November 1992. 50% had hatchlings and the rest usually with 3 green/blue eggs. (M&M). About 30 pairs were nesting in the mixed colony on the islet in Kinasi pass, February 1998 but no breeding was observed in 1999 or in 2000(observations in January only) though display was noted.

Little Egret *E. garetta*

It has not been easy to assess status on this species due to its close resemblance to the previous one. Older records are also difficult since the Dimorphic heron was once considered a race of the little egret.

It is likely that the majority of small white herons seen inland by freshwater ponds and marshes are of the species there is less certainty of identification on tidal shores.

Great White Heron *E. alba*

Sightings of individuals on Makweche islets in May, and Mlola creek November 1992, (M&M); Juani in January 1997, and on Kinasi Lodge beach January 2000 (D.B.I).

Comprehensive Check list Birds of Mafia island group

Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*

2 birds near Kilindoni power station; 10 in brackish water swamps Mlola and 2 Chunguruma November 1992 (M &M).5 seen flying over a freshwater marsh near the road, north from Kilindoni, 8 February 1998 and 1 by a small pond north of Kilindoni February 1999 (D.B.I).

Grey Heron *A. cinerea*

Recorded , usually as scattered individuals, on most visits to the tidal shores.

Black-headed Heron *A melanocephala*

One Mlola creek, May 1992 (M&M).

Goliath Heron *A.goliath*

In 1941 Piggott considered this species to be common around Ras Mkumbi (the extreme north of Mafia) and suggested it bred on small rocky islands in the south.

Darling discovered several occupied nests in August 1942 on the extreme southern most island in the Jibondo group. There appeared to be 5 nests on Jibondo in coral rag bush on the cliff edge. The nests were small and contained young. The adults fed at low tide on the near by shore.

This colony may have long since gone but individual birds are seen in Chole Bay and on west and northern shores. 1 Mlola creek, November 1992, 1, 1990 (Richmond), 2 Juani , 24-25 July 1996 and 1 near Bweni ,February 1999 (D.B.I).

Open-billed Stork *Anastomus lamelligerus*

Mentioned by Richmond 1990 but apparently no further records until 1999. In January 1999, there was an evening movement from Mafia eastwards towards Juani , 2 at tree top level over Kua and another 2 crossing the bay at dusk 25 January. The next evening 51 individuals were counted flying east over Kinasi Lodge .

In January 2000, 26 were watched in Chole bay and 7 on the islets in Kinasi pass were displaying. During my 11 day stay Open-billed Storks were seen over the bush south of Utende almost every day . Also recorded in January 2002 (D.B.I)

Secred Ibis *Threskiornis aethiopica*

A bird recorded in the heron/egret breeding colony ,Kinasi pass on 25 January 2002 was the first record for Mafia (D.B.I.)

Hadada Ibis *Bostrychia hagedash*

A fairly common resident seen by all observers particularly near the coast. Paired birds use the top of dead Palm as vantage perches along the Kinasi trail.

Comprehensive Check list Birds of Mafia island group

There appeared to be a small roost on Juani of about 15 birds, January 1999 (D.B.I)

African Spoonbill *Platalea alba*

Piggott observed a flock of 20 birds in shallow water between Juani and Chole in early January and mentioned seeing them on the southern islets (presumably south of Jibondo) in December (1941?)

Greater Flamingo *Phoeniconaias ruber*

Richmond lists this species 1990. Several birds in inter tidal regions were recorded in September (1992) by Frontier and on Jibondo island.(M&M)

White-faced Whistling Duck *Dendrocygna viduata*

Considered a fairly common species. The only widespread duck on Mafia though most records are from the Kilindoni region and the scattered pools in the north and centre of the island. Occasionally seen on the shore. 14 birds on freshwater ponds near Kilindoni and 100 birds counted on ponds situated between Baleni and Mlola, November 1992 were typical. (M&M)

White-backed Duck *Thalassornis leuconotos*

Moreau writes 'Numerous on the freshwater pools of the main island' October 1937 & 38 A flock of 12 were seen on large ponds near Matanda Matatu in Chunguruma November 1992 (M&M).

Could this inconsistency be either a reduction in population or were these records of fall passage? No other records have been found.

African Pigmy Goose *Nettapus auritus*

Recorded Baleni, May 1992 and 5 pairs Matanda Matatu ponds in Chunguruma, November 1992 (M&M).

A pair on temporary water Kilindoni, 17 February 1998 (D.B.I)

4 pairs on Chunguruma ponds 28 January 2002 (D.B.I.)

Black Kite *Milvus migrans*

Common especially around Kilindoni and Utende. Often seen crossing Chole Bay

African Fish Eagle *Haliaeetus vocifer*

Comprehensive Check list Birds of Mafia island group

Not mentioned by Moreau. Regularly seen around Chole bay with 2-4 individuals often counted. One bird frequented the heron roost on Chole island at dusk and was seen to take a fruit bat and a snake on two separate occasions, February 1997 (D.B.I).

Palm-nut Vulture *Gypohierax angolensis*

Mainly single birds recorded regularly from the Chole Bay area from 1992

Little Sparrowhawk *Accipiter minullus*

One Banja, May 1992 (M&M) and one near the camp on , 11 June 1996 (D.B.I).

African Goshawk *A. tachiro*

First specimen identified by Grant pre 1940. Since then there has been records from Kirongwa, May 1992, Mlola and Chunguruma(‘ regularly heard calling’), November 1992 (M&M).

A single bird almost daily on Chole , June 1996, where it took a small bird near the camp water bath; a juvenile, January 1997 ; a female Kinasi lodge, 25 January and Chole, 27 January 2002 (D.B.I)

Lizard Buzzard *Kaupifalco monogrammicus*

Two birds in cultivated areas Mlola November, and near Baleni May 1992. (M&M) Seen regularly throughout January and February 1999 in the Chole bay area ,and from Bweni, Dundani and Ras Mbisi .All in Palm Plantations (D.B.I).

Wahlberg’s Eagle *Aquila wahlbergi*

Widespread sightings in May 1992. ‘Commonly seen at Kilindoni and up to 6 birds in Baobab dominated areas around Mlola,’ November 1992 (M&M). There appears to be no other records.

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*

A Single bird seen on a coral rag island, Chole Bay, 9 February and possibly the same bird occasionally seen from Chole ,10 -16 February 1998 .

A bird by a small pond north west of Kilindoni and 2 birds along the cliff edge on the east coast near Kirongwe, 26-27 January 1997. Regularly seen, Chole bay January 2002. These records suggest that Ospreys may winter on Mafia (D.B.I)

Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus*.

Comprehensive Check list Birds of Mafia island group

One moving south over Kilindoni during a migration of Eurasian Swifts, 8 February 1998. An individual perched on a dead palm near Kinasi Lodge was thought to be of the African race *F. p. minor*

Helmeted Guineafowl *Numida meleagris*

Locally numerous in the bush country from Baleni, in the centre of Mafia, to Ras Mkumbi in the north. Domesticated birds were common around many communities on Mafia

Black Crake *Amaurornis flavirostra*

Records by the African collector (Moreau) 1937; 1938 (Richmond) 1990; Mlingwa and Msuya--2 birds in a swamp near Kilindoni and '3 pairs at Chunguruma chased by Jacanas,' November 1992, and 2 birds by the side of a pool near Ndagoni, 16 February 1999 suggests this secretive species is not uncommon and is likely to be a resident in many of the small lily ponds on Mafia.

Allen's Gallinule *Porphyrio alleni*

'not uncommon on Mafia', Moreau, September 1940. Since then only Richmond 1990 has recorded this species.

African Jacana *Actophilornis africanus*

A common resident. Present on most small lily ponds throughout Mafia. 6 on the temporary pond near the airport Kilindoni, February 1998 (D.B.I)

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus*

2 birds at Mlola swamps, November 1992 (M&M).

Crab Plover *Dromas ardeola*

A fairly common offseason visitor to suitable shores with concentrations around Chole Bay, approximately 500 in January 1997 and circa 1000 on 7 February 1998. Most visit the mangrove fringes around the bay and sand islands at high tide.

There appears to be regular local movements across Mafia and perhaps to the mainland. Numbers begin to fall in January. June 1996 only 10 were counted in Chole bay (D.B.I).

Water Thicknee *Burhinus oedicnemus*

Comprehensive Check list Birds of Mafia island group

Moreau reports that they are common throughout the Mafia group in the bush and cultivation and in the evenings often on shore. (1990). Greenaway photographed a nest with two eggs about 4 October. They were laid on ground prepared for a new coconut plantation littered with bark and other debris. (early 1930s)

Frequently heard at night in January and June. Scattered pairs are often disturbed along the Chole Bay shores, occasionally on Chole and Juani. Four by a flooded rice field near Kirongwe February 1998. (D.B.I).

Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*

A fairly common offseason wader on sandy shores and in small parties feeding amongst the mangrove roots at low tide. Maximum count 60 Kinasi beach, 14 February 1998 Present from October to at least late February. Only one heard at night throughout my stay in June and July 1996 (D.B.I)

White-fronted Plover *C.marginatus*

There has been no other records of this species until February 1999 when scattered groups, some showing signs of summer plumage, were seen along Chole Bay sandy shores. 33 were near Forodani Chole, 17 February. Similar numbers were feeding in Kilole bay, Chole Bay, January 20 2000. (D.B.I.)

Whether these birds were on passage or had been overlooked in previous visits remains to be determined.

Lesser Sandplover *C.mongolus*

Not always easy to distinguish from the previous species in offseason plumage but recorded in small numbers in Chole Bay. Four present in a mixed party of waders on Kitutia reef, 26 January 1999. Scattered individuals noted but not counted in 1998 and 2000. (D.B.I)

Greater Sandplover *C. leschenaultii*

Although not one of the commonest waders on Mafia shores, it is frequently seen ;often scattered individuals January/ February D.B.I)

[Pacific Golden Plover] *Pluvialis fulva*

Richmond (1990) records this species but with some uncertainty.

Grey Plove *P.squatorola*

One of the commonest offseason waders wintering along the Mafia shores. Often scattered and difficult to count but always represented in low tide wader flocks in January and February (D.B.I).

Comprehensive Check list Birds of Mafia island group

Senegal Plover *Vanellus lugubris*

Recorded by the African collector in 1937 seen only on bare stony ground on Jibondo ; in 1938 a flock of 10 visited Kilindoni. (Moreau)
In January 1997 I watched a pair with a half grown chick along the cliff shore east of Kirongwe (D.B.I)
M&M records the species on grassland near Mrali ,north Mafia, May 1992.

Bar-tailed Godwit *Limosa lapponica*

6 in a large party of waders on Kitutia reef south west of Jibondo on 26 January 1999, were the first recorded on Mafia.
1 on the Kinasi shore, 28 January 2002 (D.B.I)

Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*

One of the commonest waders wintering in Chole Bay and on most shores on Mafia. 350 counted on 12 February 1998 along the Kinasi shore, was a small sample of the population. Many spend high tide in mangroves around the islands , and east and north of the bay

Eurasian Curlew *N. arquata*

Much less common than the previous species perhaps about 1/10th as numerous.

Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis*

One possibly two seen in a flooded rice field Kirongwe area, 28 January 1997.
5 around a tidal lake on Juani, 6 February 2002 (D.B.I)

Greenshank *T. nebularia*

Recorded by Richmond 1990.
A widespread and fairly common off season migrant mainly on tidal shores and estuaries. Usually solitary but 20 counted together, 12 February 1998. Maximum 50 in Kilole bay, (Chole Bay), January 2000 and 100 in January 2002(D.B.I).

Wood Sandpiper *T.glareola*

Present in small numbers on saline marshes north of Chole Bay, January 1997. A single bird by a pool near Kiruni, February 1999 and 3 feeding on the side of a brackish pool near Kilole Bay, January 2000 (D.B.I)
Also abundant on tidal areas near Banja ,north Mafia ,in May 1992 (M&M)

Terek Sandpiper *Xenus cinereus*

Comprehensive Check list Birds of Mafia island group

A frequent off season wader around Chole Bay though in small numbers. Maximum along the Kinasi shore between 20 and 30, 23 January 1999. (D.B.I)

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*

A common and widespread off season wader usually solitary feeding in or on the edge of mangroves. Occasionally by freshwater ponds and streams.

One, 20th June 1996 Chole Bay (D.B.I)

Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*

Present in small numbers during January and February .Maximum 10 in a mixed wader flock Kinasi ,February 1998. (D.B.I)

Sanderling *Calidris canutus*

Apparently not recorded before 1999 .As many as a dozen frequented Klole Bay Chole Bay in January. Smaller numbers recorded from the north west shores of Mafia. (DB.I)

Little Stint *Calidris alba*

An off season visitor in small numbers. Small parties seen feeding around tidal pools in Chole bay January/February.

Curlew Sandpiper *C. ferruginea*

Generally the commonest off season wader to Mafia usually making up the majority of most mixed flocks around the tidal shores . Perhaps more common ,than in my previous visits, in January 2000.

Sooty Gull *Larus hemprichii*

Three birds on the shore at Ras Mlisi , south west Mafia on 1 February 2000 appear to be the first Mafia record, perhaps as a result of an increasing presence of this species around the Tanzanian islands to the north in their off season.

2 in Chole bay ,February 2002.

[Grey-headed Gull] *L. cirrocephalus*

Frequently observed by the Frontier Expeditions (not more than 5 together) in the Port at Kilondoni May and November 1992. (M&M)

Swift Tern *Sterna bergii*

Comprehensive Check list Birds of Mafia island group

Numbers vary in and around Chole Bay, usually one or two fishing along the shores most days in January/ February, occasionally as many as 20 but 40 in January/February 1999 and 60 frequently resting on fishing boats, in January 2000. Only one recorded in June (D.B.I)

Lesser Crested Tern *S.bengalensis*

Approximately 30 frequently resting on fishing boats with the previous species Chole Bay January 2000 but not often seen within the Bay. 60 were counted with other terns on Kitutia reef south west of Jibonda ,26 January 1999. (D.B.I)

Roseate Tern *S. dougallii*

Darling 'found eggs on the 'last islet' of the Mafia group south of Jibondo' 26th August 1942. 'The top of the rock of fretted coral was 20 feet across pinnacles with spaces between'. The natives told him terns bred there in large numbers but he was too soon. This site compared favourable with that on Chumbe island in 1994, as did the breeding time and the gradual return of individuals implied by the description above. Darling's site was close to Kitutia reef often frequented by terns. 8 Roseate terns were fishing near by in January 1999 (D.B.I)
Recorded also by Frontier- 6 birds off Kilindoni port November 1992 (M&M)

Saunders's Tern *S. saundersii*

13 individuals on Kitutia reef 26 January 1999 were the first records of this species for Mafia (D.B.I)

Laughing Dove *Streptopelia senegalensis*

Moreau noted that this dove 'was only seen about Chole township, where the African collector noted as curious its partiality for orange pips'!. 1940
Frontier counted 16 birds, usually in pairs, in thickets on Juani November 1992
Mackworth-Praed and Grant 1960 and Britton 1980 believed that this species was introduced on Mafia. Since it was not recorded on the main island but only on Chole and Juani, these islands may have been the sites of introduction.
In June 1996 I found a nest on Chole with 2 eggs and found the species common.
In 1999 I heard and saw 2 or 3 birds in the mangroves along the Kinasi Shore trail opposite Juani. Laughing Doves were seen frequently and further south near Kilole bay in January 2000 and 2002. I suspect there may be a colonisation of the mainland occurring. (D.B.I).

Ring-necked Dove *S. capicola*

Moreau ' throughout the Mafia Group both wild and as a cage bird'(also Voeltzkow). There is little to add. All observers have recorded this species but perhaps less frequently than Moreau implied.

Comprehensive Check list Birds of Mafia island group

Red-eyed Dove *S.semitorquata*

Moreau 1940- 'seen throughout the Mafia group and very abundant on Bwejuu and other islets'.

Widespread and very common in mangroves, palm plantations and cultivated areas. Besides the main islands, the small Euphorbia covered islets in Chole Bay are breeding sites for this species and there is constant movements to and from these islets.

Emerald-spotted Wood Dove *Turtur chalcospilos*

Often seen and heard, a widespread and common resident. Particularly well represented along coastal thickets and on the offshore islands. Fledged young noted in July 1996 on Chole

Blue-spotted Wood Dove *T.afer*

Members of the Frontier expeditions noted three Wood Doves with red bills seen feeding in the school grounds on Juani, May 1992. Further observations in November suggested 'a frequently seen but local species' possibly confined to Juani. (M&M)

Tambourine Dove *T.tympanistria*

Locally common though not easy to see. A frequent visitor to the water baths on Chole 1996-8 and seen and heard from the east coastal forests and from the Kinasi Shore trail. Also seen in cultivated areas near Kilindoni and Kanga-ngome(M&M)

Green Pigeon *Treron calva*

Moreau states 'Common on the Mafia group. The collector found a nest with eggs about the end of August (1940). A nest with 2 eggs on Makweche island near the heron colony (M&M)

An abundant resident recorded from the coastal forests, the Kinasi shore trail, Chole island (30 or more frequently fed on wild figs in the early morning - 12 January 1997) and commonly around Chunguruma and on (Juani.M&M)

Grey-headed Lovebird *Agopornis cana*

Newman 1898 mentions this species on Mafia but no other records. Britton 1980 'Nominate race is said to have been introduced to Zanzibar and Mafia island but there is no evidence of its occurrence since 1920 (Baker 1990)

[Livingstone's Turaco] *Tauraco livingstonii*

Recorded from Mlola coastal forest, May 1992 (M&M)

Comprehensive Check list Birds of Mafia island group

Black and White Cuckoo *Oxylophus jacobinus*

Recorded from coastal thicket and mangrove near Kirongwe, May 1992 (M&M)

Klaa's Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx klaas*

Recorded from cultivation near Kilindoni, May 1992 (M&M)

Didric Cuckoo *C. caprius*

Heard and seen from Chunguruma, Baleni, Kilindoni and Banja (M&M) with frequently records from Chole, Junai and the Kinasi Shore trail during January, May, June and November.

Yellowbill *Ceuthmochares aereus*

Considered common throughout the Mafia group by Moreau (1940). There have been no further sighting since.

White-browed Coucal *Centropus superciliosus*

A common and widespread resident throughout Mafia included Chole and Juani. Both *C.s. superciliosus* and *C.s. burchelli* occur. Those around Utende, Chole and Juani seemed largely the former though Burchell's also occurred. Elsewhere, particularly in the north, *C.s. burchelli* seems to predominate. (D.B.I)

Barn Owl *Tyto alba*

2 birds seen and heard in Kilindoni town, May 1992 (M&M)

Barred Owlet *Glaucidium capense*

'Only heard in a few localities on Mafia', - Moreau 1940.

Heard at night regularly on Chole 1996-7 and often seen during the day along the Kinasi Shore trail where the bird(s) were mobbed by the local small birds, particularly Collared Sunbirds 1999-2000. Heard also at night from the Kinasi Lodge (D.B.I)

1 caught in the boat house Kinasi Lodge 23 January 2002

[African Wood Owl] *Strix woodfordii*

The African collector saw an owl larger than a Barred owl, on Chole.(1940)

A medium sized owl visited the dining area of the Chole camp one evening in 2002; may have been this species (per de Villiers)

Gabon Nightjar *Caprimulgus fossii*

Comprehensive Check list Birds of Mafia island group

Considered common on Mafia.(Moreau)
2 frequently seen along the Kinasi shore trail, particularly on the edge of the mangroves.
Commonly seen in the early morning, on paths through the palm plantations near Dundani, in south Mafia , January 1999 (D.B.I)

Mottled Spinetail *Telacanthura ussheri*

4 at dusk with palm swifts hawking over the Boma on Chole, 17 January 1998 and 5 the following evening seemed to be the first recorded for Mafia.
2 over Chole, 23 January; 4 over Kua ,Juani 25. January; 2 Bweni ,16 February and usually 2 seen regularly feeding along the Kinasi coast in 1999 seemed to suggest that this species had gone unnoticed and may breed in the ruins Baobabs on Chole and Kuani. Similar sightings were noted in 2000 (D.B.I)

Boehm's Spinetail *Neafrapus boehmi*

Moreau comments 'An unexpected occurrence for this rare and little known swift, was not previously known from nearer than Tabora in the west and the Zambezi on the south'.
Frontier regarded it as abundant over cultivated land near Kilindoni May 1992 . More typically, seen twice over the forest at Mlola with 5 birds counted (M&M)
2 at dusk above a river in the Mlola forest, 27 January 1997; and 2 over the forest Bweni in February 1999.(D.B.I)

Palm Swift *Cypsiurus parvus*

Widespread and common throughout Mafia and the off shore islands. There are often local movements from and to the main island from Juani and Jibondo.

Eurasian Swift *Apus apus*

A large movement took place during a heavy rain storm over Kilondoni, 8 February 1998
Birds past south averaging ,110 per minute at their peak, from 7.45 to 830 am. Small parties continued south until the rain stopped when approximately 5000 birds would have gone through. A similar but smaller movement occurred in similar conditions over Kinasi Lodge on the evening of 9 February. (D.B.I) .

Little Swift *A. affinis*

Mentioned by Frontier -'Abundant over Kilindoni November' and 'several birds over Kilindoni', May 1992 (M&M). D.B.I made similar comments in 1998, but failed to find any in Kilondoni in January/February 1999 though by 27 February this species was actively nesting in the airport buildings on Zanzibar. There are few records of the species outside the Kilindoni area

Comprehensive Check list Birds of Mafia island group

Narina's Trogon *Apaloderma narina*

'Found only in the Kinguruma (Chungurumo) forest where, from the state of their gonads and the fact that they were calling, they were evidently preparing to breed'. Moreau 1994.
'Several birds were heard calling from inside the forest at Mlola, November 1992 (M&M).

Malachite Kingfisher *corythornis cristata*

Scattered records from suitable areas particularly rice fields, estuaries, small freshwater ponds and Mangrove shores. 'Abundant in Mangroves, Chunuruma,' November 1992 (M&M).

Pigmy Kingfisher *Ispidina picta*

Though not a water bird, two perched near a pond Chunguruma November and 2 caught Kang-Ngome forest, May 1992 by Frontier (M&M).

Mangrove Kingfisher *Halcyon senegalensis*

A resident well represented along the mainland shores of Chole Bay, Chole and Juani . Also recorded from Chunguruma .
Displays and calling particularly noted around Kinasi Lodge and on Chole in January, (D.B.I)

Striped Kingfisher *H. chelicuti*

'Common throughout the Mafia group' (Moreau)
More recent observations suggest this species is not as common today as this statement suggests though appears widespread. Usually 1 or 2 may be seen on the telephone wires between Kilondoni and Utende (D.B.I)

Pied Kingfisher *Ceryle rudis*

'Sight records by Fuggles-Couchman and the African collector, who regarded it as common throughout the Mafia group (Moreau 1940).
A common bird of Chole Bay and elsewhere along the coast , as well as seen hovering over freshwater pools. A small colony of about 7 pairs breed from time to time in a sandy cliff near Kinasi Lodge. 1998. (D.B.I)

Madagascar Bee-eater *Merops superciliosus*

Moreau considers the Madagascar Bee-eater to be numerous on Mafia. He writes--'On 28 September Greenway noted that a pair of these Bee-eaters were nesting; they were frequenting a hole in a level piece of sandy ground sparsely covered with grass' The date of this nest falls within the breeding season given by Vaughan for Pemba birds.

Comprehensive Check list Birds of Mafia island group

Recorded by Richmond 1990 . Frontier describe this Bee-eater to be a common bird throughout Mafia November and May 1992 (M&M)
6-8 were seen on Chole on 16 June 1996 and at least 4 birds were positively identified in the Bee-eater roost on Chole and 2 were hawking for dragonflies over brackish water close to Kilole Bay, February 1998. There can be some difficulty in separating this species from the Blue-cheeked Bee-eater especially in dull light (D.B.I).

Blue-cheeked Bee-eater *M. persicus*

Appears to be a common offseason visitor to Mafia. Although widespread, it is particularly well represented along shores with Mangroves and Casaurina trees ; often seen hawking for insects from the telephone wires between Kilondoni and Utende.
During January a roost was established in the mangroves on the north west shore of Chole. Numbers increased from 156 on 14 , 350 on 27 January to approximately 600 on 5 February 1997. A similar pattern was noted in 1998. The roost consisted of fewer birds in 1999. Blue-cheeked Bee-eaters were not identified during my visit to Mafia in June/July 1996(D.B.I)

Lilac-breasted Roller *Coracias caudata*

A widespread and common resident on Mafia.
Young were being fed in a palm-trunk on 20 September (Moreau)

Broad-billed Roller *Eurystomus glaucurus*

Common on Mafia and Juani (Collector, Voeltzkow). Appears to have a particular preference for Coastal palm plantations.

Common Scimitarbill *Rhinopomastus cynomelas*

Considered fairly common. Recorded by all Observers from coastal regions with bush and mangroves in particular. Small parties were seen along the Kinasi shore trail and in the Utende region.

Crowned Hornbill *Tockus alboterminatus*

The first sightings of this species, on Mafia ,was by Msuya in November 1990 in the Chunguruma forest.
Frontier found it in the Mlola forest and along the forest edge, May 1992 (M&M).

Red-fronted Tinkerbird *Pogoniulus pusillus*

Comprehensive Check list Birds of Mafia island group

One seen near , May 1992 by members of the Frontier Expedition (M&M) .The only known sighting.

Yellow-rumped Tinkerbird *P. bilineatus*

A Widespread and common resident Mafia and Juani (Moreau). Seen and heard from coastal scrub and woodland ,Palm plantations and mangroves. Birds are regularly seen to enter excavated holes on the side of dead Palm trees near Kinasi Lodge and in the Mlole forest.

Mosque Swallow *Hirundo senegalensis*

‘Apparently the only Swallow breeding in the Mafia group, and present in unaccountable small numbers -only round the township’.(Kilindoni) (Moreau 1940). Since then only recorded by Frontier- Utende- May 1992 (M&M).

Wire-tailed Swallow *H.smithii*

Recorded in small numbers and irregularly from Utende , Kilindoni, Chole and occasionally elsewhere. A pair were building a nest in the boathouse, Kinasi Lodge, January 2000 (D.B.I)

Lesser Striped Swallow *H. abyssinia*

A small party seen by the African collector at Kilindoni in September apparently on passage.(Moreau)
Considered to be widespread and seen by all Observers visiting Mafia in recent years. Seen collecting mud from rain puddles on the road from Utende to Kilindoni suggesting breeding, in contrast to Moreau’s comment for Mosque Swallow.

Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava*

One flying west over Chole, 18 January and a second with pipits along the coastal strip east of Kirongwe, 28 January 1997. A single male seen near Dundani ,28 January 1999 had a slate grey head with a thin white superciliary stripe and yellow chin resembling the race M.f. beema. The only records for Mafia of this species .(D.B.I).

Grassland Pipit *Anthus cinnamomeus*

Widespread though not common and mostly singles on shores and grassland throughout the year. Nearly always present on the Mafia airfield Kilindoni.

Red-throated Pipit *A. cervinus*

Two were watched feeding with three other unidentified Pipits and a Yellow Wagtail on a stony coastal strip east of Kirongwe , 28 January 1997. The first record for Mafia (D.B.I).

Comprehensive Check list Birds of Mafia island group

Yellow-throated Longclaw *Macronyx croceus*

One near Mrali , May 1992 (M&M) a new record for Mafia.

Black Cuckoo Shrike *Campephaga flava*

Recorded from coastal thickets - Banja, Kanga-ngome and Kirongwe by Frontier, May 1992 (M&M).

Two or three males seen feeding in a fig tree most mornings along the Kinasi shore trail, January 2000. (D.B.I) .

Little Greenbul *Andropadus virens*

Confined to forests and thickets along the coast.(Moreau 1940)

Frontier found it abundant in Mlola forest, November, and recorded it from Kirongwe and Kanga-ngome May 1992 (M&M).

D.B.I found singing birds near Dundani in the south and in the forest east of Bweni in the north of Mafia.

There are no records from the off shore islands.

Sombre Greenbul *A. importunus*

A breeding resident. Abundant on Mafia and the off shore islands ,especially in coastal forests and thickets.

Dark -capped Bulbul *Pycnonotus tricolor*

Abundant and widespread. perhaps least common around Kilindoni (M&M)

A pair brought off three young ,27 December 1942 , rare for more than two eggs (Darling)

White-browed Robin Chat *Cossypha heuglini*

A sight record by Fuggles-Couchman (Moreau) appears to be the only record of this species on Mafia.

Red-capped Robin Chat *Cossypha natalensis*

A secretive species but regularly recorded from Kirongwe and Kanga-Ngome ,May and 5 in thickets in Mlola forest in November 1992 by Frontier (M&M)

2 birds regularly visited the water bath on Chole, January 1997 and seen on almost every visit to the Kinasi shore trail January 1998-2002 Also recorded from Dundani and Bweni, 1999 (D.B.I)

Comprehensive Check list Birds of Mafia island group

Eastern Bearded Scrub Robin *Cercotrichas quadrivirgata*

A secretive species but with a distinctive song. Appears widespread in woodland -5 birds in the Mlola forest November 1992 (M&M) 5 singing birds from Ras Mkumbi ,January 1999 (D.B.I)

One or two individuals always present along the Kinasi Shore trail usually in the same habitat as Red-capped Robins.

Moreau noted that the 'bird on Mafia is a large and pallid member of the species . Only noted on Mafia where it skulks in forest and thick scrub. Pakenham has recently found that the Zanzibar birds belong to the same form'

Northern Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe*

One Chole, 14 January and 2 Jibondo, 20 January 1997 . 1 Kilindoni Airfield, 8 February 1998 (D.B.I)

Probably a widespread off season visitor to Mafia.

Zitting Cisticola *Cisticola juncidis*

Common throughout the Mafia group (Moreau 1940) Usually seen and heard in wet grassland.

Green-backed Camaroptera *Camaroptera brevicaudata*

Richmond records this species. D.B.I observed individuals at close quarters and mist netted three birds on the Kinasi shore trail January 1999 confirming this species . Widespread and common around Chole bay.

Grey-backed Camaroptera *C. brachyura*

Moreau ' everywhere on Mafia and Juani' and Frontier records only Grey-backed throughout Mafia. Moreau also mentions that 'Grant and Kinnear find the Mafia specimens indistinguishable from Zanzibar birds' Observations and trapping there suggest Green-backed birds on Zanzibar . (D.B.I)

A comment in the Kinasi Lodge notes states 'Grey-backed Camaroptera, but I'm sure this is the green-backed form' (.20-26 October 1999 unknown Observer).

African Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus baeticatus*

'On Mafia group it is characteristically a bird of the mangroves, as Vaughan found it in Zanzibar' (Moreau)

5 birds seen daily feeding on the fringes of riverine forests or swamps at Chunguruma, November (M&M).

Comprehensive Check list Birds of Mafia island group

Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata*

A common offseason visitor from Eurasia. especially in the eastern scrub and coastal forests. A Guest at Kinasi Lodge from 20 to 26 October 1999 did not include this species in his list of 47 species observed around Chole Bay, suggesting first arrivals on Mafia could be after October.

A count on the island of Chole produced 75 individuals, 14 January 1997. Like those along the Kinasi shore, each bird seemed to have established a small feeding territory .Several, of these territories, were occupied again in January 1999, 2000 and 2002. The greyer mantle of these birds suggests they may be from the eastern regions of their breeding range.

Chin-spot Batis *Batis molitor*

East Coast Batis *B. soror*.

Moreau writes ‘ Birds belonging to this species (i.e *Batis molitor*) are common in the bush and on the forest edge in the main island. Further material is needed before final pronouncement can be made on the Mafia Batis population. One of the males and both the females (collected) agree with *Batis m. soror*, but the male is undoubtedly *Batis m molitor* (Kinnear, in litt.) .

It is now accepted that *Batis m. soror* and *Batis m. molitor* should be regarded as separate species.

Frontier records *B.molitor* as scarce near Kirongwe, Baleni and near Ndagoni in the centre of the main island and *B. soror* considered to be less common near Ndagoni. May 1992 (M&M) Individual birds carefully examined along the Kinasi shore trail (seen most days in January 1999 and 2000 but less often in 1997 and 1998), around Dundani in south east Mafia and on the edge of the north east coastal forest were clearly *Batis soror*. The females had pale thin and broken breast bands and the males narrow breast bands and pale crowns. Considered fairly common in these areas. No *Batis molitor* were seen. (D.B.I)

Perhaps these species occupy different habitats typified in the centre and coastal regions in Mafia respectively.

Black-headed Batis *B. minor*

Considered fairly common in coastal thickets and mangroves Jimboni and Kanga regions by Frontier May and November 1992 (M&M)

Black-throated Wattle-eye *Platysteira peltata*

A widespread and common resident particularly associated with coastal forests and bush.

Paradise Flycatcher *Terpsiphone viridis*

Widespread and common .Particularly associated with forest, bush , Palm plantations with ground bush . Frontier recorded birds in non breeding plumage in November .Males with bright blue eye rings and gapes and long tails were seen along the Kinasi shore trail in January and a pair were nest building in the Kinasi Lodge grounds January 2000 (D.B.I) .

Comprehensive Check list Birds of Mafia island group

A nest with three eggs recorded in December. (Darling)

[**Rufous Chatterer**] *Turdoides rubiginosus*
Richmond list this species for Mafia 1990 .No further information.

Collared Sunbird *Anthreptes collaris*
A common and widespread resident. Particularly associated with coastal scrub and forests, mangroves and plantations. Family parties noted on Chole, Juani and in the 'Avicennia' mangroves Kinasi Beach on most visits.

Olive Sunbird *Nectarina olivacea*
Moreau states 'Occurs on Mafia and Juani in cultivation, especially frequenting the mango trees as well as the forest.
Also recorded from Chole and Kinasi (D.B.I) and Chunguruma, Kanga-ngome, Kirongwe and Moloa forest (M&M) .

Mouse-coloured Sunbird *N.veroxii*
Found in cultivated areas and thickets Chunguruma and Kirongwe ,May and November 1992 (M&M)
Identified on several occasions in mangroves Juani 1996-7 (D.B.I).

Amethyst Sunbird *N. amethystina*
'Apparently rare on the Mafia group (Moreau 1940)
A pair frequently visited Aloe flowers and the water bath Chole camp June/July 1996 In November 1997 a pair raised a chick from a nest built under the eaves on a makuti building. Recorded from Kinasi Lodge grounds but not elsewhere, 1998-2000 (D.B.I)
Frontier regarded this species to be abundant - Kilindoni ' several males in the area' and- 'frequently seen in abandoned farms as well as thickets in Chole and Chunguruma' Recorded also from Banja and Kirongwe.M&M)

Purple-banded Sunbird *N. bifasiata*
Common throughout the Mafia group A nest observed in March by the collector (Moreau) Common in Kinasi Lodge grounds where individuals often visited the male tassels in the palm trees. A pair were feeding young in a nest, 13 February 1998.
Recorded on Chole, Juani and Jibondo. Frontier described it as 'abundant' - Chunguruma, November and 'scarce' Kirongwe, May 1992 (M&M).

Comprehensive Check list Birds of Mafia island group

Scarlet-chested Sunbird *N. senegalensis*

One sighting by Frontier Kitongwe in May and in Kilindoni ,November 1992 (M&M).
A male observed by a Guest Utende, October 1999(Kinasi Lodge)

Eurasian Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus*

Several frequented the mangroves on Chole and Juani January/February 1997 and again in January 1998.

Excellent views of at least 8 birds in the canopy of Kilindoni forest which included 1 adult male, 2 immature males and 5 females, 30 January 1999. Recorded from the Mangroves along the Kinasi trail, January 2000. Clearly Eurasian Golden Orioles do winter on Mafia as was suspected(D.B.I.)

African Golden Oriole *O. auratus*

‘According to local information, only a visitor to Mafia’ (Moreau) .Frontier twice saw a bird perched on a Baobab tree on Juani, November and occasionally recorded from Banja, Kanga and Chole, May 1992 (M&M).

[**Black-headed Oriole**] *O. larvatus*

Richmond lists this species 1990.

Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio*

2 males seen on cultivated ground Mlola, November 1992 (M&M).

An adult male on the coast, east of Kirongwe, 1997; an immature male in coastal bush near Kinasi Lodge, 13 February 1998 and several of both sexes wintering along the Kinasi shore trail January/February 1999, 2000 and 2002 .A fairly common off season visitor to Mafia (D.B.I)

Red-tailed Shrike *L. isobellinus*

An adult male was watched in coastal scrub near Kilole bay Kinasi shore, 23 January 1999. (D.B.I)

Black-backed Puffback *Dryscopus cubla*

Very common and widespread especially in coastal bush but found in a variety of habitats. Territorial displays frequently seen in January

Grey-headed Bush Shrike *Malaconotus blanchoti*

Comprehensive Check list Birds of Mafia island group

Two birds seen in the abandoned farms and one calling from a thicket Utende November 1992 (M&M).

Sulphur-breasted Bush Shrike *M. sulfureopectus*

Moreau 'A common bird of the bush on the main island , but Frontier found 2 birds in thickets on Juani, November 1992 (M&M).

One or two birds were present on most visits to the Kinasi shore trail, January 1999 and 2000 (D.B.I) .Recorded also from Banja, May 1992 (M&M).

Pied Crow *Corvus albus*

Fairly widespread and common. Concentrations of about a dozen birds often seen at Utende and Kilindoni port where they compete with Black Kite for fish remains. Noisy roosts occur in Kinasi Lodge palm trees most evenings in January 2002. (D.B.I).

Black-breasted Starling *Lamprotornis corruscus*

A widespread and common in most habitats usually seen in pairs or small parties. Nesting appears to be mainly in old palm trees along Chole Bay.

Violet-backed Starling *Cinnyricinclus leucogaster*

Moreau mentions 'only one bird and suggests from local enquiries that the species is not a resident.

Frontier recorded a single female in Utende and 2 females and a male- Chunguruma, November 1992.

A pair were seen regularly entering the top of a decapitated palm Kinasi shore trail on several days in January 1999. Possibly commoner in 2000 with immature birds noted and a likely breeding pair. (D.B.I)

Grey-headed Sparrow *Passer griseus*

A widespread resident around most villages, and in Kilindoni . Recorded from Chole, Juani and Jibondo

Golden Weaver *Ploceus subaureus*

'It seems definite that this species is now absent from Mafia although a single young bird in Voeltzkow's collection is recorded from the island'(Moreau)

Despite this comment Golden Weavers are still occasionally recorded .Frontier found a breeding colony of 20 nests in mangroves in the Banja area ,November, and recorded it there in May 1992 (M&M)

Comprehensive Check list Birds of Mafia island group

An occasional visitor to the camp water bath Chole, accompanying Black-headed Weavers. Seen on Juani January 1997. (D.B.I)

A breeding colony of 12 nests was found over hanging a coral rag cliff , south east of Kua pass Juani, January 2002 (D.B.I)

Village Weaver *P. cucullatus*

Abundant throughout Mafia, breeding colonies have a preference for palm trees where male displays on the side of the nest can be seen throughout the year. Family parties feed on the fruits of mangrove trees around Chole Bay in January and large flocks visit the local fields where they are regarded as pests by the local people.

Fan-tailed Widowbird *Euplectes axillaris*

A widespread and abundant species especially in wet meadows and swamps. In the off season often found with Weavers . Moreau suggests the middle months for breeding. Recorded on Juani.(D.B.I)

Grosbeak Weaver *Ambylospiza albifrons*

‘Apparently a rather rare resident on the main island. ----- On Mafia the African collector reports that only two birds were seen in 1937 and those on the edge of Kilindoni forest. In 1938 four old nests were seen’ (Moreau)

In 1992 Frontier reported seeing 10 birds and 4 old nests in freshwater swamps at Chunguruma (M&M).

2 females seen on several occasions feeding on Mangrove fruits near Kinasi, January 1999. 6 ,at least, feeding on figs and mangrove fruits Kinasi, were thought to be immature birds, January 2000 (D.B.I)

Green-winged Pytilia *Pytilia melba*

One with Mannikins feeding below Euclea bushes Kinasi, 2 February 1999.

Peter’s Twinspot *Hypargos niveoguttatus*

One coastal forest Kanga-Ngome M&M).

Green-backed Twinspot *Mandingoa nitidula*

One coastal forest Kanga- Ngome (M&M).

Comprehensive Check list Birds of Mafia island group

Common Waxbill *Estrilda astrid*

A frequent visitor to the water baths on Chole in January up to 20 in a flock (Frontier record flocks of 50 on Chole) .Also seen with Mannikins , Kinasi shore trail, January 2000 (D.B.I and Richmond 1999)
Abundant Kirongwe (M&M).

[Zebra Waxbill] *E. subflava*

The African collector--' Apparently uncommon, and noted only on the edges of the forests.' (via Moreau) Not recorded since .

Bronze Mannikin *Lonchura cucullata*

Abundant and widespread Appears to breed throughout the year and often in large flocks in fields and bush.

Black and White Mannikin *L. bicolor*

Abundant and widespread throughout Mafia.

Pin-tailed Whydah *Vidua macroura*

Numerous but local resident. Often seen in display along the field edges on the road to Kilindoni from Utende and in the off season with flocks of Mannikins on the mainland and on Chole and Juani .

Paradise Wydah *Steganura paradisaea*

A unusual record .A single male in non breeding plumage visited the water bath on Chole with Mannikins "1 July.1996. Possibly an escape (D.B.I)

Yellow-fronted Canary *Serinus mozambicus*

'On both Juani and the main island, but not common' (Moreau 1940)
Occasionally seen on cultivated ground Kilindoni May 1992 (M&M).

Birds of the Mafia island group

By Dudley B. Iles

Comprehensive Check list Birds of Mafia island group

During the last twenty years, there has been a steady increase in the number of Europeans and Americans spending their leisure time in Africa. Along with the usual need for sun and sea, is an underlying desire to experience the colourful culture, history and exceptional natural history of the continent. The countries of Kenya and Tanzania not only contain exciting game parks but have an interesting coastline and islands with a long human history and a less well known fauna and flora

Whilst the northern Tanzanian islands of Zanzibar are better documented, the Mafia island group, about 90 miles to the south, are much less well known. Although Mafia has a history of invasion and colonisation, visitors, primarily interested in leisure, are recent and have been encouraged by the establishment of Kinasi lodge and others by the beautiful Chole bay. Inevitably diving and sailing have been the main attraction but local people have a wider understanding of their environment and their needs are closely linked with the interests of Touristes. Thus the visitor learns a great deal of folk knowledge from the local villagers and guides they meet. The impact on the local fishing community and the wild life has been under consideration with the establishment of a marine park which is focused on the extensive Chole bay. Studies of the bay are clearly indicating that it and its surrounding islands shores are important for the considerable numbers of Eurasian shore birds which visit this region when not breeding as well as resident breeding species, all dependant on the rich marine animal life

**Comprehensive Check list
Birds of Mafia island group**