

COUNTS OF WADERS AT SOME LOCALITIES IN TANZANIA

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Introduction

There are few records of the occurrence of waders on the East African coast, even though large numbers of Palaearctic waders pass through, and winter in, the area (Harvey 1974). Of those species known to occur on the East African coast most are dealt with in the standard reference books but the information is scanty. Even Moreau (1972) does not give detailed information on Palaearctic waders in Africa, although some gaps are filled by Backhurst, Britton and Mann (1973) in their survey of less common Palaearctic migrants in Kenya and Tanzania. Pearson and Britton (1980) give data about arrival and departure time of Palaearctic waders on the Kenya coast, while Pearson, Phillips and Backhurst (1970) provide information about weights of some Palaearctic waders wintering in Kenya. Pearson (1974) describes the timing of wing moult in some Palaearctic waders wintering in East Africa, and he mentions that since 1967 some 13,000 Palaearctic waders have been netted in Southern Kenya. Harvey (1974) gives detailed information about the occurrence of waders in the Dar es Salaam area of Tanzania, while Harvey (1971a, 1971b, 1971c, 1972, 1973) also gives information about individual breeding and non-breeding wader species for Tanzania.

Areas visited

I visited some National Parks, and unprotected (for wildlife) coastal areas in the Dar es Salaam region, between 14 October and 21 November 1982. Among the former were the Serengeti National Park and the Ngorongoro Conservation Area. These areas are shown in Figure 1.

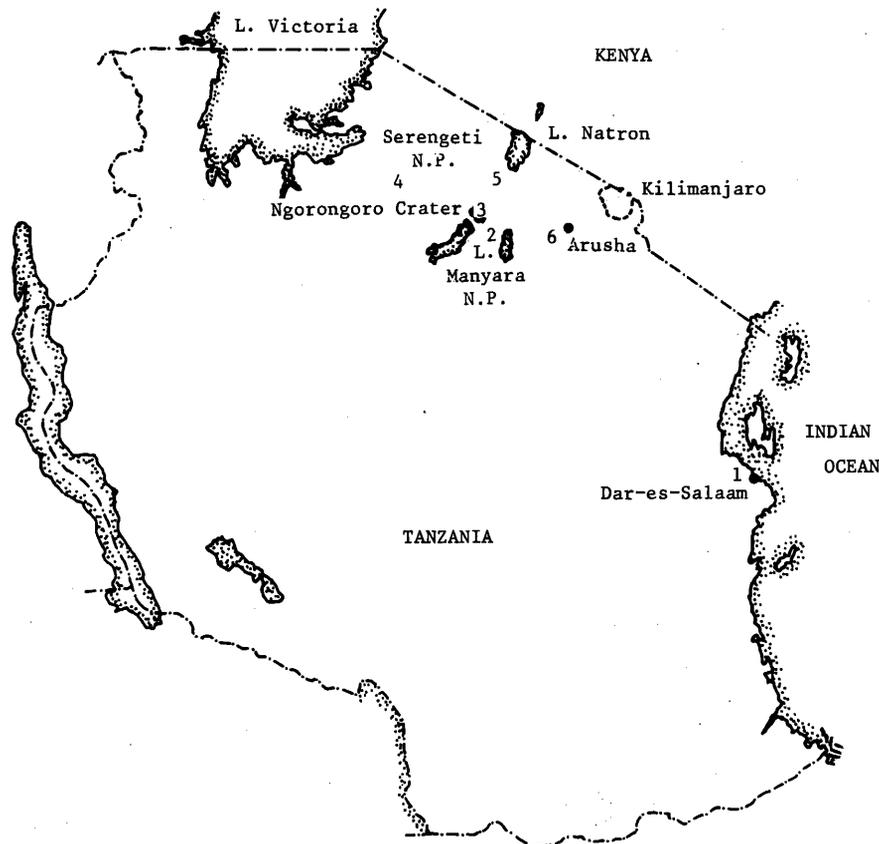


Figure 1. Sites visited in Tanzania: 1 Dar es Salaam, 2 Lake Manyara, 3 Ngorongoro Crater, 4 Serengeti, 5 River near Lake Natron, 6 near Arusha.

The habitats included sandy beaches, marshes, salt pans, salt-marshes, riverbanks and short-grass plains (see Table 1).

The physiography of the Dar es Salaam coastline is described by Sutton (1970). Most of the coast is either low coral cliff, some with a narrow beach of sand, or low sand barriers with broader beaches backed with dry scrub, thicket or coconut palms. There are no large rivers, but small streams enter the sea along this coast. Lake Manyara is a soda lake. Other habitats visited here were the rift valley wall, ground water forest, acacia woodland, areas of open grassland, the lake foreshore (salt marsh) and swamp. The salt lake is famous for its *Flamingoes* *Phoeniconaias minor*, *P. ruber*. Ngorongoro is a volcanic crater surrounded by volcanic highlands, with six peaks rising to more than 10,000 feet and is the centre of a 3,200 square miles Conservation Area. I visited the grassland at the bottom of the crater, which supports a great number of game animals. The western part is a salt lake.

Table 1. Numbers of waders seen during October and November 1982

| Locality ^a | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | Total |
|-------------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|-------|
| Habitats ^b | ABG | DG | CF | FG | E | G | |
| Date | 19 Oct | 28 Oct | 30 Oct | 10 Nov | 13 Nov | 17 Nov | |
| Black-winged Stilt | | | 30 | 2 | | | 32 |
| Ringed Plover | 1 | | | | | | 1 |
| Three-banded Sandplover | | | | | 3 | | 3 |
| Caspian Plover | | | | 85 | | | 85 |
| Crowned Plover | | | 35 | 115 | | | 150 |
| Blacksmith Plover | 24 | | 74 | | | 6 | 104 |
| Curlew Sandpiper | 150 | | | | | | 150 |
| Sanderling | 1 | | | | | | 1 |
| Terek Sandpiper | 2 | | | | | | 2 |
| Common Sandpiper | 5 | 1 | | | 2 | | 8 |
| Greenshank | | | | | 1 | | 1 |
| Wood Sandpiper | | | | | 1 | | 1 |
| | | | | | | | 538 |

a: 1 Dar es Salaam, 2 Lake Manyara, 3 Ngorongoro Crater, 4 Serengeti, 5 River near Lake Natron, 6 near Arusha.

b: A Sandy beach, B Marsh, C Salt pans, D Salt-marsh, E Riverbank, F Long-grass plains, G Freshwater pool bank.

The Serengeti National Park, the largest in Tanzania, is situated in the high plateau country between the Ngorongoro highlands and the Kenya-Tanzania border. Nearly 500 species of birds, many of them European migrants, have been recorded in the Park. There are short-grass and long-grass plains. Waders were found only in the short-grass (*Digitaria macroblephara*) plains. I visited near Lake Natron, near the Tanzanian border, a river and its border near Gelai Peak. The area is desert-like, with very high temperatures (about 40°C) during the day. Sandbanks in the river are frequent. Desert shrubs are present only along the river, and there are large sandy areas with no vegetation. I also made some observations near Arusha along pools with marshy vegetation.

Counts and Discussion

Nearly 540 waders, of 12 species, were seen. The counts are summarized in Table 1, which shows that more than half the waders were residents and of the Palaearctic species, 43% were either Curlew Sandpipers *Calidris ferruginea* at Dar Es Salaam, or Caspian Plovers *Charadrius asiaticus* in the Serengeti. Most species were recorded at inland freshwater sites, but total numbers were usually small. This was also found by Harvey (1974). Some plovers, for example the Palaearctic migrant Caspian Plover and the resident Crowned Plover *Stephanibyx coronatus*, were found in dry habitats such as on the dry salt flats and short grass plains in the Serengeti.

According to Harvey (1974) and Table 1, the Curlew Sandpiper is the most numerous and typical species of the coastal African wintering wader populations. Like Harvey (1974), who found the Caspian Plover a common winter visitor to short grass plains inland in Tanzania, I found Caspian Plovers common in the short grass plains of the Serengeti.

Data and records of breeding African waders are often sparse. I often saw Blacksmith Plovers *Hoplopterus armatus* and Crowned Plovers in pairs. Many Blacksmith Plover pairs often uttered alarm calls combined with wing-beating behaviour against intruders. No young or nests with eggs were seen. In previous years I have seen pairs with young in South Africa making this wing-beating display against intruders.

Acknowledgements

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