

A Willow Warbler find from Nigeria

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In the fall of 2022, Kvismare Bird Observatory got a report from the Swedish Ringing Central of a Willow Warbler, a species that we don't get many findings of at all. This was our first find from Africa, specifically from Nigeria. To make it even more fun, it was recaptured by a ringer in a standardized ringing site. A fantastic opportunity to find out more about how ringing is carried out in Nigeria and in which biotopes these birds live during winter. We therefore contacted the person who recaptured the bird.

We ringed the Willow Warbler on August 3, 2022 at Banvallen and it was a juvenile bird that had almost finished its post-juvenile moult but had not yet begun to put on any fat for migration. This means that it can hardly have started its migration until the second half of August at the earliest. The recapture was made on November 29, 118 days after the ringing. By then it had reached a place which is probably at least a partial goal in the migration. It weighed 7.7 grams at the time of the recapture, which indica-

tes that it was not about to continue the migration at that time. The bird had not yet started its complete winter moult but was carrying out some partial moulting mainly on the head. The distance to the find was 5,849 kilometers. The site is in a large agricultural area not far from the river Niger and is described in more detail in the part of this text written by Thaddeus Pev who recaptured the bird.

In total, there are 33 finds of Swedish Willow Warblers from the tropics before this one, figure 1. The geographical spread of the recoveries is large, with finds in the Ivory Coast and Burkina Faso in West Africa, in Yemen on the Arabian Peninsula and in South Africa. The southern subspecies is migrating towards the southwest, while the northern subspecies is migrating towards the southeast, which is clearly visible from the distribution of the finds. All but one previous find has been of dead or hunted birds. There is a previous recovery from Ghana in 2009 that was controlled by ringers so this is the second find of a Swedish-ringed Willow Warbler that has been recaptured alive in tropical Africa. Table 1 shows the reasons for the findings of the Swedish Willow Warblers in the tropics.

Before this find, Kvismaren has 21 finds outside of Sweden, figure 2. Of these, five or six belong to the eastern migration route and the others are from the southwest migration route through Europe, see figure 2. Figure 3 shows an overview of Nigeria with the find location marked. All photos in this article were taken by Thaddeus Pev.

Table 1. Reasons for findings of Willow Warbler from Sweden found in the tropics.

| Reason for find | Number |
|------------------------------------|--------|
| Hunted, shot or captured in a trap | 24 |
| Only remains or ring found | 6 |
| Recaptured by ringer | 2 |
| Found wounded | 1 |
| Unknown | 1 |



Figure 1. The Swedish finds in the tropics of Willow Warblers, amp from the Swedish Ringing Centre. The find in Nigeria from Kvismaren is shown with a blue dot.



Figure 2. Kvismarens earlier finds of Willow Warbler. Swedish findings are excluded.

Constant-effort mist netting in Weppa Farm, Edo state, Nigeria

Weppa Farm (Formerly Sunvit Farm) is a 13 000 ha agricultural landscape comprising of several thousand hectares of croplands, livestock operations along with integrated industrial processing operations as well as another 4 000 hectares of conserved woodland. (<https://www.weppafarm.com/woodland-conservation>).

In addition, small forest patches are retained on the croplands together with strips of gallery forests along streams and rivers, which form a heterogeneous landscape with a diversity of habitats for both resident and migratory birds. Cultivated crops include rice, maize, cassava, soya beans, citrus plantations, cashew plantations, oil palm plantations, mango plantations and *Irvingia gabonensis* plantations (Okosodo 2020). The farm is located in Weppa Agenebode in Edo state Nigeria

(7°02'N, 6°33'E) in West Africa (Figure 3) about 5 km from the western bank of the River Niger. Typically, the vegetation is a mixture of southern guinea savanna and riparian vegetation with Guinea-Congo forest affiliation, Figure 4 (Ezealor 2002).

Bird ringing in Nigeria started in the 1950s in different part of Nigeria (Sharland and Harris 1960). However, bird monitoring using constant-effort mist netting only started in 2001 in Amurum Forest Reserve on the Jos Plateau by the AP Leventis Ornithological Research Institute (APLORI). In 2016, another Constant Effort Site (CES site) was established in the campus of the International Institute for Tropical Agriculture (IITA) Ibadan.

Although there have been prior bird ringing activities in Weppa Farm from graduate students of APLORI on field trips, CES mist netting started on the site in April 2021. So far, Afro-Palearctic, intra-Africa and resident bird species especially passerines have been ringed in Weppa Farm. Photos of some ringed birds are shown in gallery section (Plate i — xvii). Ongoing project at the site employs both traditional and modern ornithological field methods including mist netting and ringing, point and line transects, radio-tagging, satellite telemetry and focal observations to conduct an ornithological inventory; assess and monitor the abundance and richness of birds; determine the spatio-temporal variation in habitat use and distribution; and the breeding and migration ecology of resident and migratory bird species respectively in the Farm.



The Willow Warbler from Kvismaren that was recaptured. Photo: Thaddeus Pev.



Figure 3. Weppa lies on the west side of the river Niger (from Google Earth), see the red mark.



Figure 4: Satellite Image on details of Weppa Farm, west of the river Niger.

References

- Ezealor AU. 2002. Critical sites for biodiversity conservation in Nigeria. Lagos: Nigerian Conservation Foundation.
- Okosodo EF. 2020. Influence of Different Land Use Types on Bird Species Diversity and Richness in Two Agro-Ecological Zones of Edo state Nigeria. International Journal of Wildlife and Endangered Species Conservation 3: 88–101.
- Sharland RE., & Harris BJ. 1967. Ringing in Nigeria and Ghana during 1960: Third Annual Report. Ostrich, 38: 186–188.



Plate i: Black-billed Wood Dove *Turtur abyssinicus*
Svartnåbbad fläckduva.



Plate ii: Senegal Coucal *Centropus senegalensis*
Senegalsporrgök.



Plate v: Common Bulbul *Pycnonotus barbatus*
Trädgårdsbulbyl.



Plate iii: Long-tailed Nightjar *Caprimulgus climacurus*
Långstjärtad nattskärre.



Plate vi: Juvenile Snowy-crowned Robin Chat *Cossypha neveicapilla*
Rostnackad snårskvätta.



Plate iv: Blue-breasted Kingfisher *Halcyon malimbica*
Blåbröstad kungsfiskare.



Plate vii: Common Nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos*
Sydnäktergal.



Plate viii: Whinchat *Saxicola rubetra* Buskskvätta.



Plate xi: Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata* Grå flugsnappare.



Plate ix: Melodious Warbler *Hippolais polyglotta* Polyglottsångare.



Plate xii: Red-bellied Paradise Flycatcher *Terpsiphone rufiventer* Rostbukig paradismonark.



Plate x: Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus* Trastsångare.



Plate xiii: Pied Flycatcher *Ficedula hypoleuca* Svartvit flugsnappare.



Plate xiv: Sulphur-breasted Bushshrike *Chlorophoneus sulfureopectus*
Orangebröstad busktörnskata.



Plate xvi: Yellow-winged Pytilia *Pytilia hypogrammica*
Gulvingad astrild.



Plate xv: Splendid Sunbird *Cinnyris coccinigastrus*
Regnbågssolfågel.



Plate xvii: Violet-backed Starling *Cinnyricinclus leucogaster*
Ametiststare.