

WHITE BREASTED GUINEAFOWL Wulf Gatter

Compared to Liberia the situation of forests in Code d'Ivoire is absolutely disastrous. A big exodus of farmers from the Sahel countries (mainly Burkina-Faso) into the Ivorian rain-forest zone is taking place. In large areas, farmers of the forest tribes are largely outnumbered by invaders from the north. In the whole of East Liberia, logging activities are going on as in pre-war times, and elsewhere there are local wars and terrorism.

The only remaining rainforests of good quality, north and east of the Cavalla River (border to Liberia) are threatened by perhaps 200,000 Liberian refugees. According to the members of the Ivorian Red Cross in the towns and villages at the western border of Tai National Park, more than 30,000 refugees are receiving help from the Red Cross. Because there is no chance for these people (Kran) to return to Liberia, this will be a serious threat for the remaining forest in Cote d'Ivoire and of course for Tai National Park.

There are three species of Guinea fowl in the West African Upper Guinea Zone. It seems that there is no crossover of their natural habitats. *Agelastes* is a bird of closed rainforest, *Guttera* of the moist forested Guinea savanna and disturbed forest and *Numida* of grass savanna. Each Guinea fowl lives together with one species of francolin. *Agelastes* with *F. lathamii*; *Guttera* with *F. ahantensis* and *Numida* with *F. bicalcaratus*.

I found 'singing' birds of *Guttera edouardi* not only along the strips of secondary forest, which follows the logging roads on both sides, but also in the interior of high forest blocks. I found moult feathers of *Guttera* 400-500m away from logging roads. In the evenings the melodious song of *Guttera* was heard in several good *Agelastes* habitats.

The invasion of *Agelastes* habitats by *Gutters* in all logged high forests could be a danger to *Agelastes*, which has been previously neglected. *Agelastes* lived up to the beginning of logging without natural competitors.

Francolinus lathamii is a much smaller bird, living in pairs or small family groups. *Guttera edouardi* a new invader could be a factor of interspecific competition and as a much bigger, heavier and social bird a serious danger for the smaller *Agelastes*. If this could be proved, interspecific competition could easily be a much more dangerous threat to the species than hunting because it is hard to reverse.

WPA News Nr. 36 (May 1992) : 27-28
(World Pheasant Association)

Thiollay (1975) gives in his *Birds of the Ivory Coast* a number of old records from the southwestern part of the forest zone and writes: "This bird may be restricted now to Tai (because of hunting pressure and habitat destruction)". Our activities brought no hints of recent populations north of the line Toulepleu-Guiglo-Daloa. In a 'forêt classée' west of Vavous and in several other remnants of high forest, talks with hunters indicated that the bird in the meantime seems to be unknown there.

During the second half of our stay we searched for the bird west of a line between Doukekou and Tai (7.30 W and mostly 6.000-6.30 N). This area shows still extended areas of logged but rich and widely unfarmed high forest. The area still has a much smaller human population than all the other areas of the forest zone we visited. *Agelastes meleagrides* was shown to hunters and farmers on a drawing which showed the domestic form of the village guinea fowl *Numida meleagris*, a francolin and *Agelastes*. In addition the colour-plate of the *Agelastes* poster of WPA was shown and distributed.

Many farmers and hunters of this region know the bird, some even indicating it as 'common'. Presumably the bird survives in many forest remnants and in an extended belt between 7.35W and 8.10W along the Cavalla River. I saw some indication of the bird (once a vocal record and once a short glimpse of a larger group) 29km NW of Zagne (S Guiglo) and 15km S of Bedi-Gouzon.

A small number of these pocket calendars produced by BA-ANC are still available from Jan Readman at WPA International HQ on request. Please sent an SAE.

