

First breeding record of Ahanta Francolin *Pternistis achantensis* for Nigeria

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Première donnée de nidification du Francolin d’Ahanta *Pternistis achantensis* pour le Nigeria. Le 11 janvier 2017, un nid du Francolin d’Ahanta *Pternistis achantensis* contenant quatre œufs a été découvert sur le campus de l’Institut international d’Agriculture tropicale (IITA) à Ibadan, Nigeria. Il s’agit de la première donnée de nidification de l’espèce pour le pays.

Ahanta Francolin *Pternistis achantensis* is restricted to the Guinea-Congo Forest Biome (Ezealor 2001). Although listed as of Least Concern on the IUCN Red List, it is perhaps declining locally due to conversion of habitat for agriculture, and overhunting (BirdLife International 2017, McGowan & Kirwan 2017). In Nigeria, the species is considered an uncommon to rare resident, and no breeding records exist (Urban *et al.* 1993, Elgood *et al.* 1994, Dowsett *et al.* 2017). The c.1,000-ha campus of the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) at Ibadan supports a high diversity of habitats and birds, and qualifies as an Important Bird Area (Ezealor

2001). Although expanding urbanisation is a major concern, reforestation, bird monitoring and awareness creation are improving conservation in the area. One of these conservation activities, funded by the A. P. Leventis Foundation, is the restoration of the derelict IITA Arboretum as a Tree Heritage Park (THP). The project aims to replace exotic trees with native species that are already Red Listed or known to be threatened.

On 11 January 2017, during silvicultural work at THP, an Ahanta Francolin was flushed from its nest (07°30’20”N 03°54’59”E, c.230 m) which contained four buffish eggs stained pale brown (Figs. 1–2). The nest consisted of a



Figure 1. Nest of Ahanta Francolin *Pternistis achantensis*, IITA, Ibadan, Nigeria, 11 January 2017 (Adewale G. Awoyemi)

Nid du Francolin d’Ahanta *Pternistis achantensis*, IITA, Ibadan, Nigeria, 11 janvier 2017 (Adewale G. Awoyemi)



Figure 2. Incubating Ahanta Francolin *Pternistis achantensis*, IITA, Ibadan, Nigeria, 16 January 2017 (Adewale G. Awoyemi)

Francolin d’Ahanta *Pternistis achantensis* en train de couver, IITA, Ibadan, Nigeria, 16 janvier 2017 (Adewale G. Awoyemi)



Figure 3. One-day-old Ahanta Francolin *Pternistis ahantensis* chick, IITA campus, Ibadan, Nigeria, 18 January 2017 (Adewale G. Awoyemi)

Poussin du Francolin d'Ahanta *Pternistis ahantensis* âgé d'un jour, IITA, Ibadan, Nigeria, 18 janvier 2017 (Adewale G. Awoyemi)

simple scrape close to the buttress of an *Erythrina berteroana* tree and comprised mainly dry leaves and twigs of nearby exotic vegetation, including *Cordia alliodora*, *Ipomoea triloba*, *Dalbergia sissoo*, *Erythrina berteroana* and *Leucaena leucocephala*. All four eggs hatched on 18 January and the chicks left the nest immediately. The dry leaves and twigs around the nest provided perfect camouflage; just one chick was photographed in the nest, where the dry vegetation was low (Fig. 3). The chick was dark brown with a pale bill and feet. It had a broad creamy-white supercilium, extending from the forehead to the hindneck, bordered below by a black eyestripe. This appears to be the first breeding record to be documented in Nigeria. The scarce data from other countries indicate that breeding occurs in the dry season and that a clutch of four is the norm: in Ghana eggs were found in December and small chicks and young in February–March (Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett 2014); in Liberia eggs were obtained in December–January and chicks were seen in April (Gatter 1997); in Senegal, egg-laying was estimated to occur in October–January, with young also observed in September (Morel & Morel 1990).

Acknowledgements

We are grateful to the A. P. Leventis Foundation for funding the Tree Heritage Park, Schools Forest, and Ornithological Monitoring projects on the IITA campus. Dr Juan Diego Ibanez Alamo is thanked for comments on an earlier draft.

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Received 27 January 2017; revision accepted 8 June 2017.