Other records from the same general area have also been mentioned but have not been confirmed. Further records are needed especially to establish which species are being parasitized by this cuckoo.

M. C. Jennings.

**MOUNTAIN NIGHTJAR: A NEW BREEDING BIRD FOR ARABIA**

In November 1982, whilst camped in a mountain wadi in the highlands of the Asir Province (IA13) of Saudi Arabia, I heard a night-call that I did not recognise. I had with me a mini tape recorder, used for noting singing, and with this I was able to record the call. The recording quality was poor but ultimately, as I will explain, it proved to be invaluable in identifying the bird making the call.

In the weeks that followed I searched bird literature that I had to hand to place the mystery bird but to no avail. I then sent a copy of the tape to various ornithological friends but none could put a name to it. Unfortunately, because of business pressures, I was unable to return to the wadi in question before my company transferred me to Riyadh.

The tape then lay archived for eight years until my memory of the event was stirred by reading the article on the spotted thick-knee in Arabia by Michael Gallagher and Karen Stanley Price in *Sandgrouse* Vol. 12. I wrote to Michael and sent a copy of the mystery bird tape and asked him if he thought the call might have been from one of the Burhinidae. Shortly after I received a letter from Prof Hilary Fry, whose opinion had been sought by Michael Gallagher, with the surprising and exciting comments:

“It is one of the *Caprimulgus pectoralis* complex, of three or four species of African nightjars, called Litany birds, because of their liquid rendering of “Good Lord Deliver us!” From spectographic analysis and comparison with others in the group it was most probably *C. poliocephalus* - mountain nightjar.”

In Professor Fry’s view the fact that the bird was singing, almost certainly indicated that it was breeding and it was also possible that, because its song was pitched lower than the nominate African species, it might be a new subspecies. (At this point in this brief account I must also gratefully acknowledge the considerable technical achievement of Dave Waters and Dr Peter Gray of Sultan Qaboos University for getting the best spectogram possible from a recording that was weak and of very poor quality to start with).

Since that time Peter Symens and Dr Steve Newton, both working for the National Commission for Wildlife Conservation and Development, Riyadh, have devoted considerable time and energy to securing positive proof of the identity of the mystery bird. Recently a specimen was mist-netted by Dr Newton and was positively confirmed to be *C. poliocephalus* by Peter Symens. A detailed note on this extremely localised new breeding species is currently being prepared and I shall therefore comment no further at this stage, other than to observe that but for a chance recording and the ornithological and technical expertise of many people, I might still be puzzled by that haunting call I heard in the night so many years ago.

Arthur Stagg, British Aerospace, PO Box 34, Khamis Mushait, Saudi Arabia.

*Note* Vol 3 of the *Birds of Africa* records that in the Ethiopian highlands, this species inhabits the edges of olive, juniper and other moist forests. It forages over open ground, ploughed fields, pastures etc. Eggs are laid on bare ground in Ethiopia in May and possibly February. Ed.

**BAYA AND STREAKED WEAVERS ARE NOW WIDESPREAD**

Both the Baya weaver *Ploceus philippinus* and streaked weaver *P. manyar* are increasingly being recorded in Arabia and there seems little doubt that all owe their origin to released or escaped captive birds. Young of both species have been heard in nests in July 1991 near Riyadh (MB26), Saudi Arabia (D R James). Both may breed in Bahrain (See Erik Hirschfeld’s note on Bahrain escapes species below). The streaked weaver has also been seen at various spots in the UAE (see Colin Richardson’s UAE escapes and introductions report below). The following note on nest building and breeding activity of the streaked weaver near Qatif (PB30) eastern Saudi Arabia by Eamon Sarson and Mike Athendriou, illustrates how a lot of singing and nest building activity by weavers does not necessarily mean breeding is proven.

**NEST BUILDING ACTIVITIES OF STREAKED WEAVER NEAR QATIF, EASTERN PROVINCE, SAUDI ARABIA**

On the night of 28-29 April 1989 there were severe storms with very high winds, thunder, lightning and heavy rain (about 4 cm recorded) in the Eastern Province. However by 29 April midday it had become hot and still, when we made our regular visit to the sewage lagoon of the new King Fahd International Airport (PB30). It was clear from the deposit of debris that the overnight winds had been from east south east.

We became aware of an active group of unusual birds in a reedbed. Their striking yellow heads were prominent from a long distance. There were between six and eight birds in the dense reeds which also contained many warblers and house sparrows. The unidentified birds were very active and noisy. We assumed there were three or more males (which had the striking yellow crown) and a similar number of duller females. The male had a vivid