



West African Ornithological Society
Société d'Ornithologie de l'Ouest
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SOME OBSERVATIONS ON A BROOD OF GREY WOODPECKERS IN THE GAMBIA - A pair of Grey Woodpeckers *Mesopicos goertae* was nesting in the garden of my house at Fajara (13°40'N, 16°50'W), The Gambia, on my arrival there on 22 March 1978. The nest was in the hollow limb of a *Cassia* tree, the entrance hole being 2 m from the ground and about 5 cm in diameter. It was cut through 3 cm thickness of wood and opened into a cavity 36 cm deep. What appeared to be an existing cavity had been used to form the nest; only at the entrance the wood was newly cut.

The young had already hatched and could be heard inside the nest responding to the call of the parent birds. Both adults fed the young, each making about six visits an hour to the nest. On 10 April a nestling appeared at the entrance and spent some time between parental visits looking out. The moment one of the adult birds called, as they did on their return to the tree, the nestling withdrew its head and the young would be heard calling. Soon after this date it became possible to identify, by small differences in plumage, at least two young alternating at the entrance. They were a paler grey than the adults and both had red crowns.

From 10 to 13 April one or other of the juveniles spent the daylight hours looking out of the entrance, emerging a little further each day. Their voices became much more like the adult birds'. Early on the morning of 14 April the nest was found to be empty, but at dusk the two adults and two juveniles returned to the nest to roost. They continued to roost in the nest for several weeks, spending the days together in the surrounding gardens.

The first heavy rainstorm of the season was during the night of 26 June and the nest became waterlogged. The nest was deserted (in fact the birds were not seen in the vicinity at all) until 20 November 1978, when what seemed to be the same adult pair, the male still distinguished by a patch of damaged skin on the crown which he had had when nesting, was seen at the same *Cassia* tree.

Amberley Moore