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Société d'Ornithologie de l'Ouest
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NOTES

Some notes on the Upupa Hoopoe. The small Bannerman says apropos the Senegal Hoopoe U. (e). senegalensis that it is "subject to migratory movements which are not clearly understood and may only be local": from what we know of the northward movement of many indigenous species with the onset of the rains there is no reason to doubt this. But when he goes on to say that "it breeds in May in the vicinity of Lake Chad" there is evidence that both his month and place are suspect. From 1956, when I first kept records of the Upupa hoopoe in Kaduna, I have been reasonably certain that the occasional to frequent sightings of single or pairs of birds seen from October to April, and sometimes extending to late May, year after year, were of European Hoopoes U. epops epops. Now I am not so certain, because Major Brotherton has conclusive proof of a nest with young of senegalensis in Kaduna in early March this year: it was in the base of an ant hill. He is also certain that a pair were nesting in a hole in the ground in a compound in Vom in April this year. Both sites must have been very precarious during the early rainstorms.

These observations correspond with those of V.W. Smith for the Plateau (Vom area). He suspected a nest in Vom in March 1957¹, and describes the nesting activities of a pair between mid-January and the end of February². The nesting period for the Kaduna pair was, roughly, early March to early April: as at Vom, the male provided the food - grasshoppers, crickets, grubs and the like - for the brooding female and young. Smith's suggestion that the peak period of breeding on the Plateau is January to March is not invalidated by the finding of a nest by Brotherton at Vom in April since breeding will be affected by such factors as early or late rains, whether nest holes are washed out, late broods, and the like. Smith also suggests (pers. comm.) that the bird may be double-brooded. To sum up, in Nigeria it would seem the African Hoopoe may start breeding as early as January, continuing as late as May, whilst the Palaearctic migrants are still passing through the breeding areas, and in any event breeding is not limited to the Chad area as stated by Bannerman. The only months I have not seen Upupa hoopoes in Kaduna are August and September, which agrees with what is known of senegalensis being at the north of its range during the height of the rains.

Unless the Upupa hoopoe is either netted or shot it is almost impossible to distinguish the two species in the field. My Kaduna records on epops agree generally with those of Fry (Bull. N.O.S. 6 38 and 41). However, during the last two weeks of June, 1963, an appreciable and distinctive wave of what could only have been U. epops went through Kaduna. From 15th June until 29th June each day, almost without exception, there were anything from one to five birds in my compound which, being well wooded, is not typical hoopoe habitat, usually in pairs, with numerous reports from the rest of Kaduna of "several" having been seen. From the behaviour pattern of some of the pairs, particularly courship display, they were obviously very near breeding, and certainly there were no immature birds to suggest

they already bred. Before this event the latest I have seen what I have usually taken to be epops is 25th May: in the case of this June 1963 wave, Kaduna as a whole must have had about a hundred epops each day for a fortnight. From the way the numbers and areas of reports varied I should say it was not a question of one lot of birds remaining static for a fortnight but of a wave passing through Kaduna and lasting for this period. This is a very late date for any European migrant, however, so one cannot entirely exclude the possibility of these birds being senegalensis. By way of contrast I saw only a pair in 1964. (June 14th) and nothing later than April in 1965.

M. Skillator.

1. Smith, V.W. (1962) Some birds which breed near Vom, Northern Nigeria
Nig Field 27 : 4 - 34.
2. Smith, V.W. (1964) Further notes on birds brooding near Vom.
Nig. Field 29 : 100 - 117.

Collared Sunbird feeding on berries. On 4th April 1965 the writers observed a number of Collared Sunbirds Anthreptes collaris apparently feeding in a tangled clump of Alchornea cordifolia (Euphorbiaceae) in the Ife University Biological Garden. Observation at close range with the aid of x12 binoculars indicated that they were mainly concerned with the fruiting stems of the plant. At first it was assumed that they were taking insects but after some minutes a clear view was obtained of a male bird actually holding one of the distinctive red seeds in its bill. To our surprise it promptly swallowed it.

Bates (vide Bannerman 1948) records an unusually mixed diet in this species of sunbird, including insects (both imagines and larvae), small spiders, minute snail shells and fruits. The seeds of A. cordifolia are, nonetheless, surprisingly large (8.5 mm long) for such a small bird.
K.F. Blackwell and D.R. Wells

A nest of the Buff-throated Sunbird. Bannerman (1953, The Birds of West and Equatorial Africa) states that the nest, eggs and breeding of the Buff-throated Sunbird Chalcomitra adalberti have not been described, and as I know of no descriptions since that date, it may be of interest to record that I found a nest with two well-grown nestlings in a garden at Shagamu, Western Region, on 10th February 1962. The nest was built 15 ft. above the ground, in the shade of a canopy of creepers enveloping a dying tree about 20 ft. high. The external appearance of the nest very closely resembled that of its congener the Scarlet-breasted Sunbird C. senegalensis, a slightly untidy (for a sunbird) jacket of fibrous plant material suspended amongst a few dry-looking leaves at the end of a twig of the tree, perhaps incorporating some of these leaves into the structure of the jacket, and finished at the bottom into a straggly point or beard of wispy fibres and/or spiders' webs. The entrance hole was at the side, facing tangentially with respect