



West African Ornithological Society
Société d'Ornithologie de l'Ouest
Africain



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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

to the tree, and with a slight overhang or 'porch'. I was able to see inside the nest (on a visit two days later) by climbing the tree and pulling that part of the canopy towards me, and the lining of the nest differed in construction from the jacket. It was fibrous and whitish and probably consisted of kapok (Bombax). I was fairly sure that there were not more than two nestlings. Both parents were watched for a short time taking food to the nest and removing faecal pellets. Eggshells could not be found in the vicinity. No association with venomous insects was noticed.

In short, the breeding is apparently just like that of C. senegalensis, as would be expected. The date, however, is unusual. Although sunbirds have a fairly protracted breeding season, they are definitely wet-season breeders, and this is the only dry-season sunbird nesting record I have made - and the height of the dry season at that.

C.H.Fry

Sexual behaviour of the Hammerkop. At Waza National Park in Northern Cameroun, in February 1962, a group of 3 Hammerkops Scopus umbretta at a water-hole were observed 'reverse mounting'. One bird hopped on another's back, spread its wings and uttered shrill cries. After half a minute it hopped down. The bird which had been below then jumped onto the third bird's back and performed similarly. There is a photograph of this strange performance in *Memoires de l'Institut Francais d'Afrique Noire* No. 48 : Le Parc National du Niokolo-Koba; Dakar, 1956 (p. 88). Stowell (1954, A note on the behaviour of Scopus umbretta, *Ibis* 96 : 150-151) describes in some detail this behaviour, which he witnessed at Lake Victoria on three occasions.

H.H.Gray

White-throated Bee-eaters breeding in Nigeria. In view of the fact that the White-throated Bee-eater Aerops albicollis is such an abundant, widespread and conspicuous bird in winter in the southern half of this country and on passage throughout the country, it is remarkable that there is but little more than surmise as to its breeding in West Africa in the literature. Bannerman (1953) says that it "...breeds in...May to September in the arid northern belt...For a long time its breeding place was not discovered, but we now know that it repairs to the edge of the Sahara to rear its young, excavating holes in the sides of rain gullies well within the desert." Ward (pers. comm.) noted the presence of birds in the vicinity of Nguru in summer and thought there might be a breeding population. On 29th June 1965 on a journey from Maiduguri to Malam'fatori at the mouth of the River Yobe (and on the return journey on 11th July) pairs of White-throated Bee-eaters were much in evidence along the whole route except within 20 miles of Maiduguri, and these birds were almost certainly breeding. The North-Western route out of Maiduguri was taken, via Magumeri (12° 04' N., 12° 48' E.) to Damarsac, so if these birds were breeding, they were doing so well within the accepted area of Sudan Savannah as well as