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**Société d'Ornithologie de l'Ouest**  
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A BIRD BATH IN AN IBADAN COMPOUND.JERICO RESERVATION.

Netta Robinson.

The amount of available food for birds in tropical Africa would seem to be at a constant level with no apparent seasonal shortages. Therefore we found that dispersing grain and nuts on bird tables and logs in the compound served only to accommodate multitudes of ants which were to be seen labouring to and fro conveying guinea corn, nuts etc. to their holes, while the birds we wanted to attract displayed total disinterest. With an abundance of natural food always readily obtainable but a seasonal lack of water, it seemed feasible that a properly constructed and well sited pool to supply the needs of both passerine and non-passerine birds for drinking and bathing purposes would entice a fair distribution of species to our garden, and so with this end in view we set out to select a site and to build a natural type pool where the birds could enjoy the maximum protection and security.

After some debate and surveying we chose a position situated 13' from a side dividing hedge of leggy cassias and facing the side veranda of our house. The site was flanked by three Frangipani's and a Palm Tree on the one side and by three bouganvillia's and two Palm Trees on the other. With the low bending boughs from the cassias this afforded a very adequate canopy for the birds where they would be able to descend to the pool by easy stages - alighting in a topmost branch and gradually working their way down to a Frangipani where there was a low hanging branch about 6' from the ground nearest to the proposed pool. Flanking one Palm Tree were four hibiscus bushes, a little close to our veranda but still offering extended seclusion to the birds. A flower bed bordered the area between the Hibiscus bushes with Jasnin and more Hibiscus bushes on the other side, the bed running the length of the house in front of the veranda, the veranda being approximately 70' from the pool site.

The pool itself eventually emerged as a boat-shaped depression shaved gently out of the ground, half a bag of cement being used in its construction to line the base and sides. It measured  $5\frac{1}{2}'$  by  $3\frac{1}{2}'$  across and shelved gently from both ends to a depth of three to four inches in the centre. When it was complete and the cement quite dry we filled it with six buckets of water, declared it open and, as we walked away there was a small splash behind us and then another small splash, a Pygmy Kingfisher Ispidina picta was our first visitor, he must surely have been watching the completion of operations.

Some notes were kept of the species visiting and using the pool and also of regular visitants to the compound but not using the pool between April 1968 and August 1968, Observations were made on the behaviour and vocabulary and are included in this report.

SPECIES VISITING AND USING THE POOL April 1968 - August 1968.

Pygmy Kingfisher Ispidina picta: The first and afterwards regular visitor throughout the period mentioned above. The whirring of wings as he dried himself in a tree could always be heard after he had finished bathing.

Blue-breasted Kingfisher Halcyon malinbicus: Viewed the pool from the branch of the frangipani but we did not see it bathing; - sat for about 20 minutes contemplating the water before flying away; proximity of water was obviously an attraction and visits were all in the evening. Not seen in compound after May.

Kurrichane Thrush Turdus libonyanus: A regular visitor, using the pool daily. A nest was noticed at the end of July in fork of Cassia tree, about 6-8' from the ground. One fledgling in nest and at time of noting was fairly well grown and left the nest four days later.

Snowy-crowned Robin Chat Cossypha niveicapilla: A pair visited the pool regularly each evening at dusk - 6.45pm to 7.15pm. and in April and May we saw them occasionally in the mornings 7 - 7.30am. The two birds were seldom if ever at or in the pool at the same time - one waited in a tree and, should it approach the pool while the first was bathing the latter at once flew up to the tree and its place was taken in the pool by the former. Owing to the fading light it was sometimes difficult to see them but their presence could be detected by a characteristic flipping of the wings as they sat in the trees or on the branch over the pool.

Bulbul Pycnonotus barbatus: Always present but used the pool irregularly.

African Pied Wagtail Motacilla aquina: A pair whose territory seemed to be within the boundaries of our compound used the pool frequently.

Grey-headed Sparrow Passer griseus: Often used the pool and after rain bathed in company with the pair of Pied Wagtails in a pool of fresh rain water on a flat roof outside the bedroom.

Fangan's Paradise Flycatcher Tchitrea sriithii: Used the pool nearly every evening between 5pm. and 6pm.; dipping in and out of the water like kingfishers, sometimes they hovered over the water disturbing the bathing thrushes. Their call at this time was a single note harsh and strident, but after July they lost interest in the pool and seemed to have entered a courtship phase, when three or four birds could often be seen flying and flirting together, chasing each other in and out of the trees their wings quivering and shimmering in flight, their movements undulating, like a black and terra-cotta ariel ballet. In August they were very noisy and making the diddle, diddle, diddle call remarked upon by Elgood in his description of this species in his West African Nature Handbook. They were still not using the pool but were always present in the vicinity of the compound. I did not discover where or if they were nesting close by although they were closely observed.

Wattle-eye Flycatcher Platysteira cyanea: On 7th August two Wattle-eyes seen skimming over the surface of the pool. Often present in compound.

Bronze Mannikin Sperniestes cucullatus: Favoured the shallows, standing in groups on the shelving ends and shower bathing in the spray from the thrushes or bulbuls.

Spectacled Weaver Hyphantornis brachypterus: A pair were frequent bathers.

Red-vented Weaver Malinbus scutatus: A single bird observed in the pool on one occasion only.

Laughing Dove Stigmatopelia senegalensis: Frequent bathers and drinkers.

Red-billed Wood Dove Turtur afer: Occasional visitor to the pool.

Glossy-backed Drongo Dicrurus adsimilis: In August two drongos were seen skimming and belly-flopping over the surface of the water, one coming in from one direction and one from the other and crossing mid-stream; occasionally one would miss the water and would do a neat turnabout to have another go. They were seen to be catching insects. Before this, only rarely was this species seen to take interest in the pool although present in the compound at all times.

Puff-back Shrike Dryoscopus gambensis: A pair of these shrikes were observed plunging in and out of the pool on 22nd July. They were often seen in the compound throughout the dry and wet season but never before in the water.

Shikra Accipiter badius: A single bird - whether the same individual is not known but thought to be very likely - arrived frequently about 12 noon to sit in the deep centre of the pool depressing its tail and rear end in and out of the water showering its wings and back. It was usual for it to sit, back to house, casting an arber eye over its shoulder to where we watched through binoculars from the veranda or sitting room. The duration of its visit was rarely less than 30 minutes.

West African Goshawk Accipiter macroscelides: Occasional visitor.

From time to time squirrels Funisciurus substriatus and the Rufous Nile Rat Arvicanthis niloticus rufinus were to be seen drinking from the pool, a pair of the latter species were often observed eating grain which we had scattered for the birds.

#### SPECIES PRESENT BUT NOT OBSERVED USING THE POOL.

Senegal Kingfisher Halcyon senegalensis: Present all the year round.

Fiery-breasted Bush Shrike Malaconotus cruentus: Noted only once.

Many Coloured Bush Shrike Chlorophoneus multicolor: Noted in compound 17th August, at top of Cassia, soon flew away.

Bell Shrike Laniarius ferrugineus: Consistently present in compound throughout dry and wet seasons. In March and April pairs were seen together courting and displaying. In addition to the familiar bell-like notes a sound not unlike that of a self-starter on a car being used when the battery is flat - a dull whirring sound - is uttered, also makes a soft clackety-clack sound when flying, latter sound noticed for the first time during rainy season, perhaps a mating note.

- African Hobby Falco cuvieri: Seen during wet season when it was observed being chased from its perch in a tree by thrushes with young in a nearby Cassia tree.
- Chestnut-winged Staling Onychornathus fulgidus: A frequent visitor to the garden.
- Yellow-bellied Sunbird Cinnyris venustus: This species was first seen on 23rd July and observed often thereafter.
- Copper Sunbird Cinnyris cupreus: The male of this species began assuming breeding plumage in mid-February and had, apart from one or two individuals, completed by March 20th. Was afterwards absent for two months from June and was noted again on 5th August.
- Olive-backed Sunbird Cyanonitta verticalis: Absent since the onset of the rains, this bird was seen again on 8th August. In January was seen in company with Cinnyris chloropygius hovering over the newly watered leaves on plants.
- Olive-bellied Sunbird Cinnyris chloropygius: Absent from the compound during dry season. Records show that in 1963 it appeared in February after early heavy rains. In 1967 appeared during April/May.
- Grey-backed Camaroptera Camaroptera brevicaudata: A nest was discovered on 21st August in a shrub in the compound containing one white egg. The female was in attendance but was disturbed by our unwittingly trimming the shrub; she returned later to the nest.
- Willow Warbler Phylloscopus trochilus: Seen often although no dates or records of its movements kept.
- Yellow Wagtail Budytes flavus: Present in wet season.
- Rufous-chested Swallow Hirundo senirufa: In mid-April this bird was seen in the compound for the first time.
- Yellow White-eye Zosterops senegalensis: On 18th August this species was seen for the first time since May.
- White-throated Bee-eater Aerops albicollis: Present in compound throughout the dry season.
- Guinea Wood-hoopoe Phoeniculus erythrorhynchus: Passed through compound frequently.
- Didric Cuckoo Lampronorpha caprius: Seen and heard frequently.
- Klaas' Cuckoo Lampronorpha klaasi: Not positively identified in garden, but thought to be heard.
- Rufous-bellied Coucal Centropus eponidis: One sighting of this bird recorded in compound. A single bird.