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THE NEST AND EGGS OF THE MOHO OR
ORIOLE BABBLER *Hypergerus atriceps*.

J. R. Lang

Bannerman (1953) says of the Moho *Hypergerus atriceps* :- "Of its nesting habits we know practically nothing. At Badagry....a pair were seen on 2nd October entering and leaving an empty nest suspended below a palm leaf. Three eggs were found in a nest in Portuguese Guinea on 16th July, but the finder left no account of the eggs, which still remain to be described." According to Mr.C.J.O. Harrison, of the British Museum Bird Room (pers.comm. Sept.'69) the egg has still to be described.

Half a mile to the south-east of Vom Christian Hospital is a small copse of trees with dense undergrowth bordering a small perennial stream. Both Mohos and Yellow-throated Leafloves *Pyrhurus flavicollis* have been seen regularly in this "kurimi" during the past five years.

On 25th June 1969, a Moho was seen carrying nesting material into the copse, but no nest was seen. A week later two nests were found inside the copse, which later both proved to belong to Mohos. One of these (6 feet off the ground) seemed old and was empty. The other, which was too high for close inspection (12 feet off the ground), appeared to be newly constructed.

On 26th August, nine weeks after first seeing the birds building, I decided to knock down the higher nest to inspect its construction, and was shocked to find two newly hatched, unfeathered, young in it. Although I hitched the nest up again it was blown away, and another was being built on the end of exactly the same tendril when I visited on 4th September. By 12th September this nest was almost complete, and I saw a Moho at the nest adding further nesting material (this being the first time I had positively identified it as the nest of a Moho). Also on 4th September, I noticed that the "old" nest, low down on the other side of the stream, had been renovated, with some new material to strengthen it in places and a new "porch" added to the entrance. By 12th September there were two warm eggs in this nest. On 16th September a Moho was seen to enter the nest, but left again quickly (they are very shy, furtive birds indeed and only came to the nest this once during a watch of one hour). One egg was taken and sent to the British Museum, but it broke in transit. The other was left in the nest, and hatched sometime after 23rd September and before 2nd October when the nestling was quite well developed downy feathers, and must have been at least 6 days old. By the 7th October the young bird had left the nest. Since this sort of nest does not survive from one year to the next, and since it was already "old" in early July, and was clearly renovated for the September brood, this would seem to be strong evidence for two broods in the same nest in the same season.

The following data has been compiled from observations made on these three nests:-

Breeding Season: (?May) June - October; evidence of double-brooding.

Nest: All three were of essentially the same construction - a woven nest with a side entrance and "porch" suspended from a hanging tendril or small end-twig, overhanging the stream. The nest measures about 15" high, and is 8" in diameter at its widest; the top three inches is the woven attachment to the supporting structure, and this merges into the roof of the nest chamber, the chamber itself

being about 6" deep; below the chamber dangles an untidy mass of ragged ends of grass. The side entrance is 2" in diameter and is situated near the top of the nest chamber; it has a slightly overhanging "porch". The first nest was made entirely of fairly broad strips of dry grass - green grass which had been swept down-stream and been caught in undergrowth at high water level, and had subsequently dried out. The second, low nest, had in addition to the grass, a few pieces of dried plant woven into it. The nests were lined with finer grass "flotsam".

Clutch Size: two (c.f. Bannerman's quoted nest with 3).

Egg: The one taken measured 23mm. x 15.5mm. They both had a pale blue ground, with reddy-brown spots and blotches fairly densely at the base, and scattered lightly over the rest of the egg.

Incubation Period: ca. 14 days ?

Nestling Period: ca. 12 days ? This assumes that laying was complete by 10/17th September, and hatching occurred by 28th September, and that the fledgling left the nest on 6/7th October.

Obviously there is a lot more to be learnt of the breeding habits of this species; it is a pity that it breeds at the height of the rains, in wet places, and that it is so shy. It seems odd that, with its loud call and skulking behaviour, anyone should want to class the Moho as a warbler rather than a babbler (C.J.O.Harrison, pers.com.).

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NOTES.

THE RING'S INDEX ORNITHOLOGORUM.

An extract from a letter received by the editor.

The editor of the International Ornithological Bulletin THE RING proposes to publish an Index Ornithologorum embracing the professional and amateur ornithologists of the World.

All entries should be in English and should be accompanied by one International Postal Reply Coupon for further correspondence. Closing date for all entries is June 30, 1970, but earlier arrival of entries would be appreciated. Do not delay - send your entry to-day.

The address is: The Editor, THE RING, Laboratory of Ornithology, Sienkiewicza 21, Wroclaw, Poland.

An entry in english should contain the following information:

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