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POSSIBLE THRUSH 'ANVILS' IN UPPER VOLTA - In 'A New Dictionary of Birds' (Landsborough Thomson 1964) the Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos* and a bower bird *Scenopoetes dentiostrius* are recorded as using anvils and Boswall (*Avicult. Mag.*, 1977, 83: 88-97) has recently summarized the information relating to several other species with the same habit. In addition Richards (*Bird Study*, 1976, 24: 53-54) implied that Redwings *Turdus iliacus* use anvils and he has confirmed that he twice witnessed a Redwing breaking a shell on an anvil, observations which could have related to the same bird (A. J. Richards pers. comm.); Mackworth-Praed & Grant (1973), referring to *Turdus olivaceus* (= *pelios*) write, "habits very much those of the palaeartic Thrushes including that of cracking snails against a stone". In this note we describe evidence which we think supports Mackworth-Praed & Grant's claim about *T. pelios*.

On 11 December 1974 in a coppiced Neem *Azadirachta indica* thicket at Ouagadougou, Upper Volta, BW found an 'anvil' surrounded by the broken shells of a species of operculate gastropod snail. The anvil consisted of two small laterite stones lying on the baked mud floor of the thicket. The whole area had clearly been underwater during the wet season (July-October). A watch was kept for several hours on the following day, but it seemed most likely from the appearance of the shells that the anvil was no longer in use. Another accumulation of broken shells of the same type was found about a metre from the anvil, but these shells were without an anvil stone. A week later a large laterite stone was found with similar shell fragments. However, in this case the shell debris was mostly stuck in the baked mud and largely covered by dead leaves. All the shell fragments seemed to belong to an aquatic gastropod of the genus *Pila*.

Extensive flooding occurred in the same area on 26 July 1975. On 3 August we found another accumulation of recently broken snail shells beside a laterite stone, but later on the same day we observed a small boy breaking *Pila* shells on just such a stone anvil. He was using the soft parts to bait fishing hooks on a long-line. We decided that such human activity might have been responsible for our earlier observations. However, on 14 September 1975, near the Neem thicket, we found a single anvil with many fresh looking snail shells. This anvil was located beneath a thorny creeper in a position which precluded the possibility that even a small child could have used it. About two hours were spent watching this anvil on 14 and 17 September but no birds were seen using it.

Two disused anvils were found in November 1977 after a season of heavy flooding. Because of its position one of these could not have been the result of human activity. No anvils were found in 1976 and 1979 during several searches of the same area.

It seems that in seasons when the adjacent swamp flooded, aquatic snails of the genus *Pila* were swept into the surrounding areas becoming stranded as the flood-water receded. Many of these snails, which were about 30 mm in diameter, and had relatively thick shells, were gathered up by the local people and used as bait for fishing hooks and as human food. It seems that a few birds were also exploiting this seasonal and erratic, but sometimes abundant, food supply.

Most of the broken shells found were split into very small fragments and quite unlike the substantial remains of the much thinner-shelled *Cepea nemoralis* left by the Song Thrush. It is, nevertheless, assumed that the Kurrichane Thrush *T. pelios*, a common bird in the vicinity, was the bird

responsible for the Ouagadougou anvils. However, the possibility that some other species of bird or small mammal was involved cannot be precluded.

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J. Frank Walsh and B. Walsh

80 Arundel Road, Lytham St. Annes, Lancs., FY8 1BN, England

BREEDING OF BLACK-HEADED BEE-EATER IN ZAIRE - In their recent paper on *Merops breweri*, Dyer, Fry & Hendrick (1982, *Malimbus* 4: 43-45) state that "no nest has previously been reported, nor field notes published other than by Chapin (1939)". Obviously the paper by Schouteden (1962, *Doc. Zool.* 3: 60) has been overlooked, wherein he reported on several nests discovered at Bwamanda (03°10'N-19°15'E), Zaire, by V. Maes. In view of the importance of that discovery we think it appropriate to reproduce the field notes here once again, in full, especially since Schouteden slightly misinterpreted them. A few more recent data are added.

The Black-Headed Bee-eater *M. (Meropogon) breweri* is not very rare in the Ubangi area. Normally it is found quite close to rivers and can be observed in gallery forest. On 22 March 1962 a nest was detected when a bird flew up from the ground some 30 m from the border of gallery forest along Zingo River. The burrow was in flat sandy soil, among young *Imperata cylindrica* grass; it was 7 cm diam. and 130 cm long, curving towards the nest chamber, the floor of which was 25-30 cm below ground level. The nest contained three white eggs measuring 24.8 x 22.2, 24.9 x 22.3 and 25.5 x 22.5 mm. On 25 March 1962 several other nests were discovered along the river 500 m from the first, in recently burnt grassland with "hi donzale" (= *Trichopteryx*?) grass. Two were opened on 26 March. One burrow entrance was 60-75 cm high in a 1.5 m termite mound; the tunnel was 160 cm long and the floor of the nest chamber 50 cm lower than the nest entrance. In the burrow was a dead half grown youngster and in the nest chamber two living full grown ones on a layer of insect debris 3 cm thick (including wings of wasps and small red and green beetles). The second was in level ground between grass tussocks; the tunnel was 150 cm long, curved, with the nest chamber floor 50 cm below ground level. It contained one full grown youngster (others removed by Maes' assistant?), also on a thick layer of insect remains.

Three more nests were not seen by Maes himself. On 13 April 1962 a half grown bird from a nest with three young was presented to him (the nest said to be situated in level grassland near River Bombe); on 2 March 1974 an adult was caught on a clutch of two eggs in the same area (the nest said to be situated in an old stone quarry); and on 12 March 1974 a half grown nestling was given to Maes.

Korte Winkelstraat 1, 2000 Antwerpen, Belgium

V. Maes

Koninklijk Museum voor Midden-Afrika, 1980 Tervuren, Belgium

M. Louette