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BREEDING DATES OF BIRDS IN MOLE NATIONAL PARK, GHANA

by P.W. Greig-Smith

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Published information on the breeding seasons of West African birds is sparse. As yet there has been no comprehensive survey comparable to that made for migration by Elgood, Fry & Dowsett (1973), and their paper provides the most complete review of breeding dates. The bulk of information relating to the Guinea savanna zone is given by Fry (1965, 1970), and Wells & Walsh (1969). Therefore, it seems worth reporting records of breeding behaviour which were collected casually during studies of Guinea savanna birds at Mole National Park, Ghana. In addition to my own observations (made during three visits, - 7 July to 28 August 1974, 3 July to 3 September 1975, and 28 October to 3 December 1975), I have drawn on the occasional references to breeding made by other workers at Mole. This has produced some indication of breeding for 100 species out of approximately 200 which might be expected to breed there. Accounts of the bird communities of the area, and their migration behaviour, are given by Greig-Smith (1976, 1977).

The records are generally consistent with evidence of breeding in other Guinea savanna localities, as described for Nigeria by Fry (1965, 1970), Wells & Walsh (1969), and Elgood, Fry & Dowsett (1973). Some discrepancies are indicated parenthetically in the following list, and they are due to the fact that several species have prolonged breeding seasons (in many cases covering the latter part of the dry season, the whole of the wet season, and the early dry season: see also Elgood *et al.* 1973). The records from Mole indicate extended breeding seasons in at least four species, all of which are predominantly graminivorous, namely Streptopelia senegalensis (nesting in May, July, and November), Treron waalia (nests in May and October), Plocepasser superciliosus (nest-building in May, July, September and November) and Estrilda bengala (nests in May, July, August and September).

The significance of species' breeding seasons, in relation to diet, habitat requirements, and other ecological parameters, will be discussed elsewhere (Greig-Smith, in prep.), together with an analysis of the number of species breeding at Mole at different seasons.

RECORDS OF BREEDING BEHAVIOUR

In the following notes, all observations are by the author, unless indicated by these symbols:

- D - N. C. Davidson, July-Sept 1974 and July-August 1975 (pers. comm.)
- EG - M. Edmunds & L. G. Grimes, March 1969 (unpublished notes)
- G - R. E. Genelly, July to October 1966 (Genelly 1968)

- HH - W. G. Harvey & I. Harrison, 24 July to 7 September 1968
(Harvey & Harrison 1970)
PR - R. B. Payne & C. J. Risley, October 1975 (pers. comm.)
T - team of game rangers, May 1970 (unpublished report)
skin - study-skin deposited at Mole, examined by the author

Butorides striatus Male with enlarged testes, July 1968 (skin). (Fry, 1965, found nestlings in October and fledglings in November.)

Scopus umbretta Nest and display flight (HH)

Leptoptilus crumeniferus Occupied nests, March 1969 (EG)

Threskiornis aethiopica 'Breeds in dry season' (HH)

Dendrocygna viduata Displays (HH); juvs in Nov 1975

Nettapus auritus Possible nest-prospecting (HH)

Buteo auguralis Displays and food-passes, Nov 1975

Haliaetus vocifer Occupied nest, Sept 1974 (D)

Francoelinus bicalcaratus Juvenile at the end of post-juv moult (G)

Actophilornis africanus Juveniles, Nov 1975

Vanellus senegallus Nesting on bovals, mid July 1974 and 1975

Charadrius forbesi Nesting on boval, July 1974 and 1975; pullus, 25 Aug 1975

Streptopelia semitorquata Nest in Mitragyna bush in marsh, Aug 1974

S. senegalensis Nest with 2 eggs, July 1968 (HH); nest with one egg, May 1970 (T); bird with nest-material, Nov 1975

Treron waalia Nest with fledgling, Oct 1966 (G); nest with 2 eggs, May 1970 (T)

Poicephalus robustus Pair investigating possible nest-holes, mid-July and August 1975

P. senegalus Investigation of nest-holes, July and August 1975

Psittacula krameri Investigation of nest-holes, Oct 1966 (G), and July, Nov and Dec 1975

Crinifer piscator Display July 1968, copulation Aug 1968 (HH)

Chrysococcyx klaas Male in post-juv moult, Oct 1975 (PR)

Centropus senegalensis Nest, July and Aug 1974; bird with possible nest-material, Aug 1968 (HH)

C. toulou Held territory, July and Aug 1974

Macrodipteryx longipennis Male displaying, March 1969 (EG)

Cypsiurus parvus Nesting in Borassus palms, July 1975

Alcedo cristata Possible nest-hole (HH)

Halcyon senegalensis Nests in July and Aug 1974 and 1975

H. chelicuti Displays and copulation, July-August 1974

Merops bullocki Large proportion of birds netted in July-Aug 1974 and 1975 were undergoing post-breeding moult

M. hirundineus Juveniles, July 1975

Phoeniculus purpureus Nest with 2 young, May 1970 (T); copulation, August 1974 (D); juveniles begging, July 1974 (D)

Indicator indicator Immature birds, July and August 1975

Dendropicos obsolatus Nest in Nov 1975

- Mesopicos goertae Male with regressed testes, Aug 1968 (skin)
- Mirafraga rufocinnamomea Male with regressed testes, July 1968 (skin); display flights frequent in July and August 1974 and 1975
- Hirundo rustica (= H. lucida) Investigating possible nest-sites, July 1975
- H. smithii Nesting Aug 1975 (Fry, 1965, recorded nest-building in October.)
- H. semirufa Juvenile, August 1968 (skin)
- H. abyssinica Nests in July 1974
- Prionops plumata Juveniles begged from adults, mid July and early August 1975 (Fry, 1965, found nestlings in March and October.)
- Nilaus afer Juveniles, July and August 1975
- Dryocopus gambensis Adult female feeding juvenile, Sept 1975
- Tchagra senegalensis Held breeding territories throughout July and August 1975; adult carrying food, July 1975 (Fry, 1965, found fledglings on 23 April.)
- Malaconotus sulfuropectus Juveniles, July and August 1975
- Corvinella corvina Juvenile begged from adults, July 1975; possible nest (HH)
- Dicrurus adsimilis In moult (HH)
- Lamprotornis purpureus Nest with one nestling, May 1970
- Campephaga phoenicea Males in post-juvénal moult, Aug and Sept 1975
- Pycnonotus barbatus Nest with 2 young, July 1974; nest-building, Aug 1966 (G) (but Fry, 1965, stated that at Zaria, Nigeria, it nests in the late day season.)
- Oercomela familiaris Display, March 1969 (EG)
- Myrmecocichla albifrons Male with regressed testes, July 1968 (skin)
- Cossypha albigapilla/niveicapilla Fledgling, July 1975; display, March 1969 (EG)
- Sphenoeacus mentalis Female with brood patch, July 1975; adults carrying food, August 1975; song, March 1969 (EG)
- Cisticola erythrops Juvenile, August 1975
- C. cantans Song, March 1969 (EG)
- C. lateralis Song, March 1969 (EG); nestling and juveniles, Aug 1968 (HH)
- C. galactotes Nest with 2 eggs, July 1975 (Fry, 1965, recorded fledglings in December.)
- C. natalensis Held breeding territories, July-August 1974 and 1975
- C. rufa/brachyptera Adult carrying food, July 1975; adult feeding fledglings, late November 1975
- Prinia erythroptera Birds in breeding plumage, July 1974; song, March 1969 (EG); in moult, July-August 1968 (HH)
- P. subflava Nest in July 1974; song, March 1969 (EG)
- Hypergerus atriceps Nest, August 1975 (Fry, 1965, saw birds carrying nest material in April.)
- Camaroptera brachyura Pre-copulatory display, July 1975; juveniles, late July 1975
- Eremomela pusilla Adults feeding juveniles, July 1975, August 1974
- Sylvietta brachyura Adult carrying food, Nov 1975 (Elgood et al., 1973, state that in Nigeria it is a wet-season breeder.)
- Myioparus plumbeus Juvenile, July 1975
- Melaenornis edoloides Juveniles, July 1974 and 1975
- Bradornis pallidus Nests in July 1966 (G); nest with 3 young, May 1970 (T); adult carrying food, July 1975; juveniles, July, August, September 1974 and 1975 (for Zaria, Nigeria, Fry, 1965, stated that it breeds in April and May.)

- Hyliota flavigaster Juvenile, July 1974
- Batis senegalensis Adult carrying food, August 1968 (HH); feeding juveniles
Sept 1974 (D)
- Platysteira cyanea Adults carrying food, August and Sept 1975; juveniles,
August 1975
- Trochocerus longicauda Fledgling, July 1975; male with regressed testes,
July 1968 (skin)
- Terpsiphone viridis Juvenile, August 1974
- Parus leucomelas Juvenile begging from adult, July 1975
- Anthreptes platyura Males in breeding plumage, Nov 1975
- Nectarinia verticalis Juvenile, Nov 1975
- N. senegalensis Juveniles, mid-July to late August 1975; 'breeding', July-
August 1968 (HH); nest, Aug 1974 (D)
- N. venusta Male in breeding plumage, Nov 1975
- N. cuprea Males in breeding plumage, March 1969 (EG), July and August, 1974
& 1975; territorial, July-Aug 1968 (HH); males changing to non-
breeding plumage, Nov 1975
- N. pulchella Nests, Aug 1966 (EG), and July-August 1968 (HH); males in
breeding plumage, July & Aug 1974 and 1975
- Emberiza cabanisi Adult carrying food, early Sept 1975
- Serinus mozambicus Adults with nest-material, August 1975; nest in May
1970 (T); juveniles, Aug and Nov 1975; courtship feeding, August 1975
(D)
- Ploceus luteolus Male changing to breeding plumage, early July 1975 (cf.
Fry, 1965, who reported moult into breeding plumage in February.);
nests, August 1975 and March 1969 (EG) and July 1974 (D); juveniles,
Nov 1975; adults feeding young in nest, early August 1968 (HH)
- P. cucullatus Nesting in colonies, July 1975, and July-Aug 1968 (HH)
- P. nigricollis Adult with nest-material, Aug 1975; nest-building July-Aug
1968 (HH); juveniles, late Aug 1975
- Malimbus rubriceps Juvenile, July 1975; begging from adult, Aug 1975
- Quelea erythrops Female with brood patch, July 1974; nests in early
September 1974 (D)
- Euplectes afer Female with brood patch, July 1974; males held breeding
territories, August-Sept 1974 and 1975; male nest-building, August
1975 (D)
- E. hordeacea 2 Females with yolked ova, Oct 1975 (PR); males in breeding
plumage, July and August 1975
- E. macrourus Male with enlarged testes, August 1968 (skin); held breeding
territories, July and August, 1974 & 1975
- E. orix Males in breeding plumage, Mid-July to September 1974 & 1975;
held breeding territories, August 1974 & 1975; nest-building, August
1975
- Plocepasser superciliosus Nest-building, Sept 1968 (HH), May 1970 (T), July
and early Nov 1975
- Sporopipes frontalis Nests, Oct 1975 (PR)
- Vidua macroura Males in breeding plumage, July, August & Nov 1975
- V. chalybeata Immature male, Oct 1971 (skin)
- Vidua orientalis Males in breeding plumage, late Aug and Nov 1975
- Estrilda melpoda Juveniles, Nov 1975

- E. bengala Two nests, May 1970 (T); nest-building, July & Sept 1966 (G), and August 1975; male with regressed testes and female with oviducal egg, August 1975
- Lagonosticta rufopicta Female with oviducal egg, late August 1975
- L. senegala Male in wing-moult, July 1974
- Lonchura cucullata Nests occupied, May 1970 (T), and August 1974; nest-building, May 1970 (T), July to Oct 1966 (G), and July 1975; juveniles, August & Nov 1975

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