



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



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The flooded Kano river between Hadejia and Nguru produced the largest concentrations of duck seen in the winter. On 26 February an estimated 17750 birds were counted. This included 11000 Garganey, 2000 Pintail, 200 Ferruginous Duck Aythya nyroca, and many local duck. This area has been proposed as a wildfowl Reserve with controlled shooting during the season.

R. E. Sharland

BEHAVIOUR OF GREY-HEADED BUSH-SHRIKES AT THEIR NEST - On 4 June 1978 a nest of the Grey-headed Bush-Shrike Malaconotus blanchoti was found in a well-established garden in Bayero University campus, Kano, Nigeria. It was a rather untidy platform-like structure of black twigs, built at a height of about 5 metres in the fork of a Cassia tree. Intermittent observations totalling over 5 hours were made until the last of a brood of three young fledged on 6 July.

Normally the adults would arrive independently at the nest site, but often one would not approach the nest to feed until a second arrived. Before flying to the nest with food an adult would often adopt a horizontal posture and holding its wings slightly away from the body would quiver them rapidly. That was observed in two other contexts. When two adults were present in the vicinity of the nest one quivered its wings before approaching the other. The third context in which wing quivering was observed may relate to the derivation of this behaviour. Up until the time of fledging an adult would brood the young not only at night but also in the early afternoons, presumably to shade the chicks from the overhead sun. When a second adult arrived with food, this was always given first to the brooding adult which then passed it to one of the chicks. The brooding adult was once seen to quiver its wings rapidly before accepting the food and this behaviour closely resembled that of older nestlings when begging for food.

An adult would seldom approach the nest directly but would spend periods of up to several minutes banging its prey against a branch and manipulating it in the beak before finally wing quivering and flying to the nest. That was particularly the case with large items like mantids and with a lizard which was broken into pieces before being fed to the young.

Twice I saw three adult shrikes in the vicinity of the nest. When the nest was first discovered one adult, presumably incubating eggs, left it and uttering loud "ptut!, ptut!" calls flew into an adjacent tree where it was conspicuously joined by two others. Then on the afternoon of 30 June I saw two adults actively pursuing a Pied Crow Corvus albus whilst a third brooded the chicks. Although these observations suggest that adults other than the parents may be involved in nest defence, on no occasion were more than two shrikes observed feeding the young. This alone cannot serve to exclude the possibility of co-operative feeding of nestlings, but emphasises the desirability of studies on individually marked birds.

Roger Wilkinson