

17. ABNORMAL NESTING BEHAVIOUR OF LITTLE BROWN DOVE *STREPTOPELIA* *SENEGALENSIS* *CAMBAYENSIS* (GMELIN)

During the course of a short term project on 'Ecological Isolation among Doves', we recorded a pair of little brown dove *Streptopelia senegalensis* building quite a large nest in a room of a coal depot located in a busy area of Aligarh town. The dove laid four clutches in three months. It discarded three clutches but the fourth was successfully hatched. The breeding behaviour was unusual in various aspects, viz. nest site, clutch size and nesting materials. All these differed from the information given by Ali and Ripley (1973).

Methodology: Observations were carried out mainly in the afternoon. Measurement of nest and number of eggs were recorded. Observations were taken from a distance of three metres. Percentage of attentiveness was calculated by dividing the time spent by bird at nest by the total observation time.

Observations: The nest was spotted on 3 October 1986 and first laying was observed on 8 October. Two layings were observed on 15 and 27 October and the final laying on 20 December. The time between first and second layings was seven days; between second and third 12 days; and between third and fourth it was 53 days.

The first egg laid on 8 October was incubated for three days before being discarded. The second egg was incubated for eight days. The third clutch was of two eggs and the bird incubated it for 16 days, but the eggs were probably infertile. On 20 December two eggs were laid and successfully incubated. The young hatched on 2 January 1987, giving an incubation period of 14 days.

Nest attentiveness: The dove did not attend the first two clutches. In the third clutch maximum attentiveness was 24.1% in the beginning which decreased to 11.4% in the third observation. In the fourth clutch the attentiveness increased from 28% in the beginning to 76.6% at the end.

During the observations an interesting shift pattern was seen. The room had two ventilators (1 and 2); ventilator 1 was the normal entry point, but the second bird entered from ventilator 2 to relieve its partner. The incubating bird used to leave the nest only when it was assured of replacement by its partner. It always moved to ventilator 1 and sat there till the reliever occupied the nest. While incubating, the bird constantly changed the position of eggs to provide equal heat to all sides of the eggs. During the later part of the incubation period the bird was seen broadening the brood patch by plucking 4-5 feathers from the abdominal region.

Nest: The nest was built on an electric meter board inside a small room located in a coal depot. There was peepal tree *Ficus religiosa*, a neem tree *Melia azadirachta* and common grass (doob) *Cynodon dactylon* in the vicinity. The coal depot was in an area with factories all around.

The nest was at a height of 2 m from the ground. The base of the nest rested on the electric meter board. The nest measured 22.5 cm in length and 15 cm in width at the top, and was lined with thin copper wires available from the adjoining factories. The main nesting material was dry twigs of neem and dried grass.

The observations determine the incubation period of the little brown dove as 14 days, and indicate that like other birds on certain occasions this dove also can change its set pattern of nesting behaviour. The discarding of three earlier clutches could be on account of inexperience of the pair as has been recorded in the small green barbet *Megalaima viridis* by Yahya (1980).

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