

(Brown *et al.* 1982) but did not have fully developed plumage, which occurs at 86 d; their age from their size was estimated, therefore, to be between 60 and 80 d. Allowing 28 d for incubation and 1 d for each egg laid, this pair probably started laying in October, just at the end of the long rains. The clutch size is 4–8 (Brown *et al.* 1982). To produce six well grown young suggests few predators or a high degree of parental care.

Broods seen on the River Akaki in Ethiopia in 1974 and 1975 also indicated laying dates from October to December (Pain *et al.* 1975), after the end of the long rains, and before the laying dates given for Ethiopia by Brown *et al.*

The behaviour of a pair of Black Ducks on a moorland pool on the Aberdares in December 1989 indicated that they may have had a nest. One adult was observed upending on the pool. It then cautiously moved to the moorland at the edge, looked around, climbed out on to the bank and disappeared into a clump of heather. After two to three minutes, it, or a different bird, emerged from the heather and moved out on to the pool. The ground below the heather was then checked for a nest and after a minute spent searching, a second duck was flushed from the vegetation. No nest was found but there were numerous grass tussocks and clumps of heather in or under which a nest could have been. Further searching was abandoned for fear of causing the duck to desert.

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A commensal feeding association between African Spoonbills *Platalea alba* and Great White Egrets *Egretta alba* in Tanzania

On 2 December 1979, while observing birds at the edge of the swamp in Katavi National Park near Mpanda in southwestern Tanzania, I noted four African Spoonbills *Platalea alba* alighting close to a Great White Egret *Egretta alba*. The egret was

feeding actively in shallow water. The four spoonbills followed the egret closely, and darted forward repeatedly to peck at items behind and around its feet. This deliberate behaviour, which continued for more than ten minutes, resembled that described by Lewis (1989) between a Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis* and an Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta*. Presumably the spoonbills were profiting from invertebrates or small fish disturbed by the egret's movements.

Brown *et al.* (1982) describe African Spoonbills as feeding alone or in small groups of up to six or even ten birds, usually sweeping their bills from side to side for invertebrates, but sometimes darting about rapidly like a Little Egret *E. garzetta* catching fish. The spoonbills' behaviour at Katavi was akin to the latter activity, but their association with another species was not recorded by Brown *et al.* Nor do Cramp & Simmons (1977) mention such commensal behaviour in the Eurasian Spoonbill *P. leucorodia*.

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Interactions between Giant and Pied Kingfishers

Megaceryle maxima and *Ceryle rudis*

Kleptoparasitism or piracy, where one species steals food from another, is widespread among birds, notably raptors, skuas and gulls. Whilst some species obtain much of their food by piracy, others are opportunists, having many different feeding strategies. Among kingfishers, piracy appears to be rare, so the following observation may be worth recording.

During a weekend in February 1990 I noted frequent attacks by Pied Kingfishers *Ceryle rudis* on a Giant Kingfisher *Megaceryle maxima* at Lake Naivasha, Kenya. Both species were feeding in shallow water where the rising lake water had flooded grassland with scattered *Sesbania* trees. The Giant Kingfisher spent most of the time perching in one of these trees, flying down to catch prey from the water. Whenever it flew back up from the water with food, usually two Pied Kingfishers appeared and relentlessly pursued it through the trees and over a nearby papyrus *Cyperus papyrus* swamp. Whilst it was not always possible to witness the outcome of these pursuits, on several occasions the Giant Kingfisher was forced to abandon its prey.



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