

and came to the conclusion it must be called *parkini*. I suppose it is quite certain that the nests in the thin branches of trees were those of the Tree Sparrow. I searched the country outside Quetta in the autumn in vain for this sparrow and all I saw were in the town itself, and concluded that they nested in the usual sites in holes in buildings.

Again I must ask if it is quite certain that the Crag Martin which nests round Quetta is the Egyptian bird *Ptyonoprogne obsoleta obsoleta*. The bird of S. Beluchistan, Sind and the Bolan is *Ptyonoprogne pallida* (J.B.N.H.S. xxxi, p. 869). The common Crag Martin round Quetta is *Ptyonoprogne rupestris*. If there is no mistake over the nesting of the Indian Cliff-Swallow at Mastung, this is a tremendous extension of range, as this bird is not known to breed in S. Punjab, Sind or in the rest of Beluchistan. Were specimens obtained?

It will be noticed that, when I wrote the *Birds of Beluchistan*, I could not determine which race of Cuckoo bred in N. Beluchistan (J.B.N.H.S. xxxi, p. 880), and that I had only seen two specimens thence, neither of them breeding birds for certain, and these two were not *telephonus* but corresponded with *sub-telephonus* of Zarudny. If Messrs. Williams have not examined a breeding series, it would have been better to have left their records under the binomial name.

I have seen no breeding Kestrels from Beluchistan. All birds I have examined, winter birds and possible breeding birds from Kandahar, belong to the typical race and it would have been better, had Messrs. Williams stated what evidence they had that the breeding form is *interstinctus*.

Though the authors of this paper record *Streptopelia senegalensis ermanni* as the breeding bird at Quetta, there is no doubt that the bird nesting there is the Indian *cambayensis* (vide J.B.N.H.S. xxxii, p. 73).

The nesting of the Quail near Quetta recorded by Meinertzhagen appears to have been overlooked.

APPLEDORE,

KENT,

September, 1929.

CLAUD B. TICEHURST.

### XIII.—THE INCUBATION OF EGGS DURING THE HOT WEATHER

The following cases of eggs hatching during the hot weather, after several days' desertion by the parent birds, may be of interest. In May last a Bulbul nested in a fernery adjoining the porch of my bungalow and was sitting on three eggs for about a week. On the 27th idem, I saw the bird sitting, but on the following day neither of the parent birds appeared. In the evening I inspected the nest

and found only one egg; the birds were not seen again either on the nest or in the vicinity.

On the evening of May 30th, three days later, I again inspected the nest to see if the egg was still there and found it in the process of hatching. Later, I removed the shell and covered the nest with cotton wool for the night.

In the morning my wife and a friend fed the squeaker with white ants; he opened his mouth willingly and took the decapitated corpse of a white ant eagerly at intervals. By about noon he was quite strong and, when opening his mouth for food, emitted a mild 'cheep'. I am inclined to think the parents heard this mild cheeping as they appeared in the fernery and seemed somewhat agitated. We immediately replaced the squeaker in the nest and watched. The old birds returned but did not go to the nest—and then the tragedy?

We could not actually see the nest from the verandah; but a peon watching it rushed in a few minutes later to say there was a reptile at the nest. I went out quickly with .22 rifle loaded with a short cartridge to find a 'bloodsucker' (*Calotes versicolor*) with his head in the nest. I shot him, but too late, he dropped the mangled remains of the youngster from his mouth. I might mention that about ten days previous to this tragedy, when there were only two eggs in the nest, a Koel found it but was driven off. During the afternoon he returned and on hearing much protest from the parents, I went out with my .22 rifle to find the enemy sitting on the top of the fernery looking into the nest, being buffeted by the old birds.

I am glad to say he paid the penalty and I hoped after that my Bulbuls would be safe. Unfortunately not, the tragedy described above was the finale.

There are three interesting points in this occurrence:

The hatching of the egg after complete desertion by the parents for three clear days.

The loss of two eggs only which caused the birds to desert.

The return of the marauder to the nest only a few minutes after the squeaker had been replaced.

The disappearance of the two eggs I attribute to a bloodsucker; but why did he not return for the other egg later?

I had frequently seen several of these reptiles in the roof of the fernery and in the past all efforts of other birds to nest in the fernery have resulted in failure, the eggs disappearing mysteriously.

In connection with the hatching of eggs without further incubation by the parents, I can give another instance which occurred in Ahmednagar during the hot weather of 1922.

A hen sitting on ducks' eggs died on the nest after 22 days' incubation. Although the eggs were cold when found, they were kept near the fire in the kitchen until another hen could be procured some hours after. The following day the substitute 'broody' was found standing under her basket cover, she had laid an egg and the ducks' eggs were again cold.

I put the eggs in another nest intending to use them for testing another broody hen. After three days, one of my hens became

broody and I put her on the eggs on trial. After four days, on going to put fresh eggs under her, I found a duckling hatching and during that day and the following day five ducklings hatched from the original twelve eggs.

The total period of incubation, including the three days during which no hen was near the nest, was 33 days.

Probably such cases are fairly common, but I do not remember having seen instances of them noted in the Society's Journal.

This incident occurred early in May, when the day temperature in Ahmednagar would be a maximum of about 105 and a minimum of 85.

In connection with the above notes, I should like to know whether the bloodsucker is an asset to a garden or not?

I believe he destroys a lot of grubs, caterpillars and the like, but I caught him in the act destroying my bulbuls and I prefer birds to flowers.

I have waged war on him since, and my bag up to date is twenty-two.

5 ARSENAL ROAD,  
POONA,

September 17, 1929.

C. O. LOWSLEY,  
P.W.D.

[The tendency to brood is a normal element in the cycle of reproductive activities of the female bird. With some species such as Hornbills, Hoopoes and the Eagle-Owl this duty is performed exclusively by the female. With the Rhea and Emus incubation is carried out by the cock bird alone. With the Common Sandgrouse the cock bird sits by night and the hen by day, but with the majority of species both parents brood in irregular alternation. In hot countries such as India, many birds seem to trust to the heat of the sun to hatch their eggs and incubation is relaxed to a great extent during the day. Hume (*Nests and Eggs of Indian Birds*, Vol. I, p. 378) refers to four young mynahs which hatched out without any apparent effort on the part of the parents at incubating the eggs by day. Dewar (*Indian Bird Life*, p. 237) mentions the emergence of three young Pond Herons from eggs which he had taken from the nest and placed in a vase three days previously. In the hotter parts of India, the effect of the direct rays of the sun on eggs which are not protected by cover of any sort may be strong enough to cook them; the body of the brooding bird may then become a shield from the sun. Common Sandgrouse, which frequently nest in bare open plains where the eggs are exposed without the protective cover of scrub or grass or stone, never leave their eggs uncovered during the hottest part of the day. Similar conditions make the Cream-coloured Courser a very close sitter. We have had an instance nearer home. In Bombay our local crows took very readily to building their nests on the brackets carrying the overhead electric railway cables. Within the city limits, these nests are usually built of wire or hoop iron. The nests are not sheltered in any way and are exposed to the direct rays of the sun. It was noticed that the crows brooded in the wire nests during the

hottest parts of the day but did not sit in them by night; they roosted in the neighbouring trees. The nests were hot to the touch even at 2 a.m.

Desertion of the nest after it has been tampered with varies not only with different species but also among birds of the same species. Some birds will continue to sit after some of the eggs have been stolen or if the nest is handled in any way, while others of the same species will desert the nest on the slightest provocation.

The common bloodsucker (*Calotes versicolor*) is mainly insectivorous—that he occasionally robs nests is evident from the above note. But we could hardly recommend his extermination on these grounds.—EDS.]

#### XIV.—THE TAIL-RACKET OF *DISSEMURUS PARADISEUS*

I am grateful to Mr. Salim Ali for having pointed out a mistake in my paper on the Study of Indian Birds regarding the racket of *Dissemurus paradiseus*. Mr. Salim Ali is wrong in assuming that I copied my information from the two editions of the *Fauna*; I examined the specimens in my collection very carefully and drew the illustration from one of them. Mr. Salim Ali seems to think it curious that the illustration agrees with the condition described, but he does not suggest how the condition should be otherwise illustrated as in fact the racket is borne in such a position that it appears to be the outer web; that it is not so is not apparent to my eyes, either naked or with a lens. If, however, the shaft of the feather is drawn slowly through the tightly closed nails of the finger and thumb, it slowly rotates, from which I accept Mr. Salim Ali's contention that, what appears to be the outer web, is really the inner web. It is an interesting point and one must assume, I suppose, that the weight of the rackets was originally responsible for the twist in the feathers.

BATTLE, SUSSEX,

HUGE WHISTLER.

August 18, 1929.

#### XV.—NOTE ON THE NESTING HABITS OF THE SOUTHERN RED-WHISKERED BULBUL (*OTOCOMPSA* *EMERIA FUSCICAUDATA*)

The fourth reappearance of this bird, to nest in a fern-pot in my verandah, reminds me that I made some notes of its appearances on former occasions. A pair of the birds first built their nest in a hanging pot of ferns in the verandah in front of my drawing-room during the first week of last September. Only two eggs were laid, but this small clutch may be explained by the comparatively large size of the eggs as compared to the hen bird. The nest was composed entirely of casuarina leaves, very neatly and closely woven together, and this same nest has served to rear three successive broods in without anything being done in the nature of



Lowsley, C O. 1930. "The Incubation of Eggs During the Hot Weather." *The journal of the Bombay Natural History Society* 34, 247–250.

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