



# Biodiversity Observations

<http://bo.adu.org.za>



**An electronic journal published by the Animal Demography Unit at the University of Cape Town**

The scope of Biodiversity Observations consists of papers describing observations about biodiversity in general, including animals, plants, algae and fungi. This includes observations of behaviour, breeding and flowering patterns, distributions and range extensions, foraging, food, movement, measurements, habitat and colouration/plumage variations. Biotic interactions such as pollination, fruit dispersal, herbivory and predation fall within the scope, as well as the use of indigenous and exotic species by humans. Observations of naturalised plants and animals will also be considered. Biodiversity Observations will also publish a variety of other interesting or relevant biodiversity material: reports of projects and conferences, annotated checklists for a site or region, specialist bibliographies, book reviews and any other appropriate material. Further details and guidelines to authors are on this website.

Paper Editor: H. Dieter Oschadleus

---

## COMMON FISCAL PECKING CAPE WEAVER NEST

**Sue Joy Schultz**

Recommended citation format:

**Schultz SJ 2017.** Common Fiscal pecking Cape Weaver nest. Biodiversity Observations, Vol 8.42: 1-2

URL: <http://bo.adu.org.za/content.php?id=337>

Published online: 28 August 2017

**AVIAN BEHAVIOUR****COMMON FISCAL PECKING CAPE WEAVER NEST**

*Sue Joy Schultz*

29 Seven Sleepers Way, Kirstenhof, 7945 South Africa;  
[suejoyschultz@gmail.com](mailto:suejoyschultz@gmail.com)

On a windy day of Monday 24 July 2017 at about 17h35 I was observing birds at the Kirstenhof Wetlands, Cape Town, South Africa. This is one of “MyBirdPatch” areas.

There is a willow tree next to a large patch of reeds, near the playground end of the Kirstenhof Wetlands. There was one green nest and one new ring in the willow tree. Cape Weavers *Ploceus capensis* were seen building nests here previously.

An unringed Common Fiscal *Lanius collaris* female was seen in the willow trees. She first investigated the green ring nest, where she pecked at the side walls. Not yielding any food, she flew to the other nest, being a newly made green Cape Weaver nest. Sitting on the roof top, she vigorously pecked at the roof to presumably work a way into the contents.

But the nest was too closely woven and well made. As she was not able to peck her way in, she gave up and flew off to the nearby reeds.

This is the first time I have seen this type of Fiscal behaviour.

Unfortunately without a camera on the day, I was not able to record this behaviour but a photo of the nest site was taken later (Fig. 1).

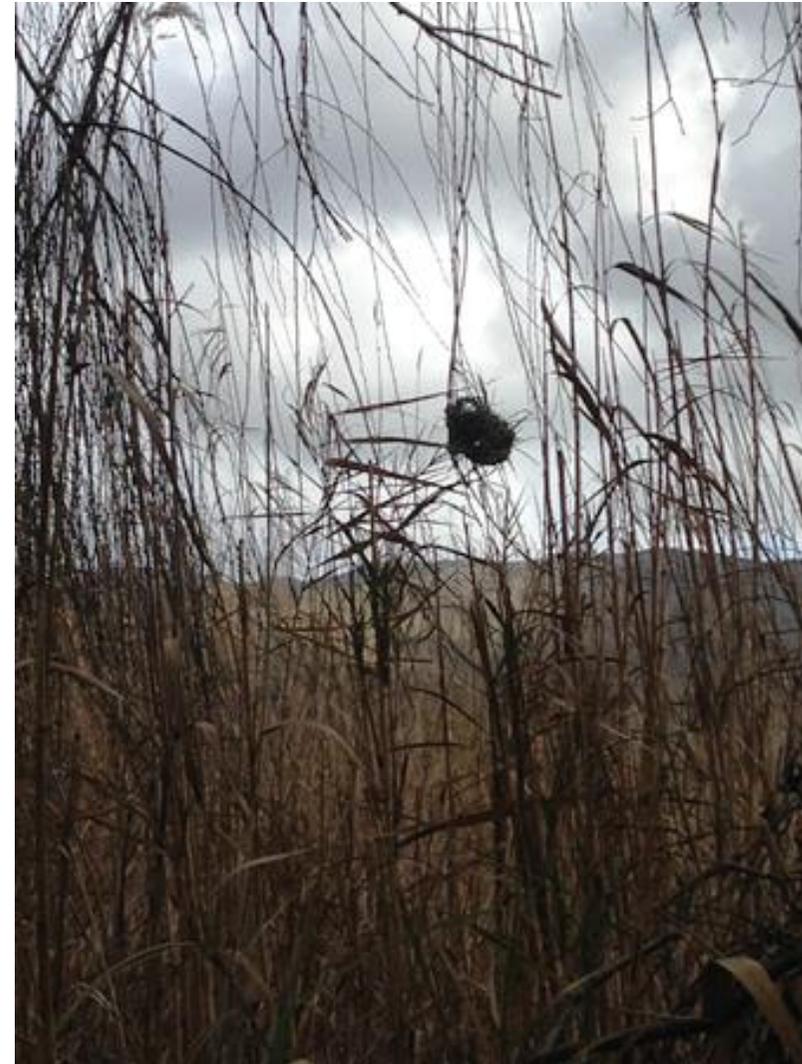


Figure 1. Cape Weaver nest in willow at the study site (taken on 16 August 2017, some 3 weeks after the shrike observation; PHOWN 26466)

---

## Discussion

The Common Fiscal is known to prey on chicks from bird nests (Hockey et al. 2005), including weaver nests. It has not been recorded as predating Cape Weaver nests (HDO pers comms), but has robbed the nests of a similar weaver, the Southern Masked Weaver *Ploceus velatus* (Schoeman 1995). It is strange that the Common Fiscal was trying to rob green nests, i.e. no eggs or chicks expected in the nests. Invertebrates may be present on weaver nests, but the Common Fiscal did not appear to be feeding on the nests. It did not appear to be trying to steal nest material, although this is a possibility. The nest of the Common Fiscal is made of sticks, not green grass or reed blades, although aromatic herbs and other plant material is used as nest lining (Hockey et al. 2005).

## References

Hockey PAR, Dean WRJ, Ryan PG (eds) 2005 Roberts Birds of Southern Africa, 7th ed. John Voelcker Bird Book Fund, Cape Town

Schoeman S 1995 Observations on breeding biology of Masked Weaver *Ploceus velatus* at Lydenburg. Safring News 24:55-58