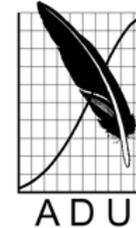


Ornithological Observations



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Ornithological Observations accepts papers containing faunistic information about birds. This includes descriptions of distribution, behaviour, breeding, foraging, food, movement, measurements, habitat and plumage. It will also consider for publication a variety of other interesting or relevant ornithological material: reports of projects and conferences, annotated checklists for a site or region, specialist bibliographies, and any other interesting or relevant material.

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OBSERVATIONS OF A JUVENILE GREATER DOUBLE-COLLARED SUNBIRD *CINNYRIS AFER*

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OBSERVATIONS OF A JUVENILE GREATER DOUBLE-COLLARED SUNBIRD *CINNYRIS AFER*

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A few pairs of Greater Double-Collared Sunbirds have taken residence in our garden through the years. We live on the farm, Springbrook, near Highflats in southern KwaZulu-Natal (S30°14 E030°08). I have often seen them nesting in the garden and then heard the juveniles calling their continuous begging calls once they have fledged.

On Sunday 3 October 2010 I observed a single chick leaving one of the nests for the first time (Fig. 1). It flew about 5 m from the nest into a Bottle Brush tree *Callistemon subulatus* where it perched. This was the only chick to hatch and leave the nest. According to Smith (2005) a clutch normally has two eggs.

The juvenile bird spent the rest of day in the Bottle Brush calling to the parents begging for food. Both parents dashed around the garden in attempts to find food for their offspring. Around 16:45 I heard the begging call from the nest. The juvenile bird had returned to the nest for the night. The following day it repeated this behaviour and returned to the nest by nightfall.

The area had some heavy rain during the rest of the week. In this inclement weather the juvenile did not venture out of the nest at all and the parents fed it in the nest.

From 8 October, after the weather had cleared up, it was back in the Bottle Brush tree and it returned to the nest at nightfall. One afternoon around 17:00 I observed the female going into the nest.



Figure 1 – The juvenile Greater Double-collared Sunbird peeping from the nest.

She called the juvenile which then flew across the garden to the nest. It moved around on top of the nest and then went into the nest to settle down for the night. The female left the nest once the juvenile entered. The juvenile covered the entrance to the nest from the inside with some large feathers (Fig 1).

By 21 October the juvenile still spent every night in the nest – 18 days after it left the nest for the first time. Smith (2005) mentioned juveniles staying with the parents for at least 10 days after leaving the nest. In this observation this period was longer than previously recorded and it may be due to the inclement weather during the first week after it fledged.

In this period of closely monitoring the same nest, I have observed the female feeding the juvenile inside the nest as well as outside it. When she arrived at the nest with food, the juvenile peered out from



amongst the large feathers which lined the nest entrance (Fig 1), took the food from the female and when she flew off it started its begging call once more.

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