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NATURE RECYCLES: EGYPTIAN GOOSE BREEDING IN AN OLD SECRETARYBIRD NEST

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NATURE RECYCLES: EGYPTIAN GOOSE BREEDING IN AN OLD SECRETARYBIRD NEST

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The Egyptian Goose *Alopochen aegyptiaca* mostly nests on the ground, not far from water, but also in trees such as on top (or inside) old Hamerkop *Scopus umbretta* nests, on top of Sociable Weaver *Philetairus socius* nest masses and also on old nests of crows, herons or cormorants (Tarboton 2011). They also use old raptor nests such as those of Black-winged Kites *Elanus caeruleus*, Long-crested Eagles *Lophaetus occipitalis*, African Fish Eagles *Haliaeetus vocifer* and Black Sparrowhawk *Accipiter melanoleucus* (Davies and Allan 2005).

Early in July 2012 a pair of Secretarybird *Sagittarius serpentarius* was observed near an old nest site from the previous season on the farm Klein Rustplaas (S29°17.528' E25°57.567'), south of Bloemfontein along the Jagersfontein road. As it was believed that they commenced breeding again in the same nest where two young were ringed in July 2011, the nest was inspected and a possible nest pad was observed there (De Swardt 2011).

The nest site was revisited on 21 July 2012 to see if there were any breeding activities and if any eggs were present. The observer expected to see a Secretarybird fly off the nest in the Buffalo Thorn *Ziziphus mucronata* which had been monitored for more than one season. The surprise was that an Egyptian Goose was observed flying away from the nest. The nest was inspected with a nest mirror and a clutch of 5 eggs surrounded by brown down was present in the



Fig 1 - A clutch of 5 eggs of an Egyptian Goose in the nest of a Secretarybird at Klein Rustplaas, Bloemfontein on 21 July 2012.

nest. The nest contents was subsequently photographed getting access with a long ladder (Figure 1). The nest was approximately 4 m high on top of the tree.

This observation represents another record of an old raptor nest being utilised by Egyptian Geese, this time the nest of a Secretarybird (Davies and Allan 2005).

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