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# Provisional atlas of breeding birds of Swakopmund in the coastal Namib Desert

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# LANIOTURDUS

Volume 51 No 2

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Journal of the Namibia Bird Club  
[www.namibiabirdclub.org](http://www.namibiabirdclub.org)

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The Namibia Bird Club was founded in 1962 and has been active since then. The club's mission is to contribute to Namibian ornithology by, amongst other things, arranging regular birding outings, conducting bird ringing and atlasing excursions and educating the public about the value of birds. To achieve this, we organise monthly visits to interesting birding sites around Windhoek as well as regular visits to Avis Dam and the Gammams Sewage Works and occasional weekend trips further afield. Bird club members also participate in the African Waterbird Census twice a year.

Experienced birders are more than happy to help beginners and novices on these outings. If you have a transport problem or would like to share transport please contact a committee member. Depending on the availability of speakers and suitable material we present occasional lecture or video evenings at the Namibia Scientific Society premises. Members receive the bird club's journal, *Lanioturdus* and outings and events are advertised on the club's website [www.namibiabirdclub.org](http://www.namibiabirdclub.org).

The Namibia Bird Club is not affiliated to any global or regional organisation and relies entirely on members' subscriptions and donations to fund its activities.

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# LANIOTURDUS

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Cover photo © Holger Kolberg

## **Editorial**

Holger Kolberg  
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Winter is usually a time of dormancy and hibernation but this issue of *Lanioturdus* certainly has somewhat of a breeding flavour to it.

How many of us have birds breeding in our gardens? The only time we take notice is when the birds destroy our plants in their quest to gather nesting material or when we find a little chick that has dropped out of a nest before fledging.

We probably also notice the nests but how many of us have taken note of when the bird started building the nest, when were the eggs laid, hatching date etc.

Although a good summary of breeding data for the birds of Namibia has been published, it still contains many gaps and even when paging through 'The Bible' i.e. Roberts, it is amazing how little information is available about the breeding habits of some species.

In fact, I remember when Roberts VII was published, there was a list of 'missing information' published on the book's website and a lot of it pertained to breeding. I still have that list somewhere; perhaps it is time to dig it out...

Keep birding!

## Axel Eriksson's "Memoir of Birds' Nests" (Part 2)

Eckart Demasius

e-b.de@iway.na

All photographs © Eckart Demasius unless otherwise stated

Reading historic documents always induces a sense of nostalgia in me. However, it is important to establish how accurate Eriksson's nest and egg descriptions were and where cases of misidentification have occurred.

I have compared each of Eriksson's descriptions with the nest and egg descriptions in Roberts VII, "*Roberts - Birds of Southern Africa*". (Roberts VII descriptions are in *italics*).

Roberts VII's descriptions are very lengthy and detailed and I have thus quoted only the sections required for comparison with Eriksson's descriptions.

In addition I have inserted photographs of nests and eggs (where available). The eggs and some bird nests were photographed at the Swakopmund Museum, which has a splendid egg collection. Most of the remaining photographs are from my own collection.

I leave it to the reader to determine for him/herself how good and accurate Eriksson's descriptions were at the time in the 1880's, some one hundred and thirty years ago, compared with the accumulated current knowledge in Roberts VII.

Cases of misinterpretation are pointed out by means of a note at the end of the description.

Eriksson's "*Memoir of Birds Nests*" starts with an index of 44 bird species' nest and egg descriptions. However the very first entry, of the Southern Boubou, is not numbered. Thereafter the birds are numbered in accordance with his index.

Some birds, e.g. "eagle" and a nightjar cannot be identified and those are omitted from this discussion.

(The spellings and grammar in Eriksson's texts are his and have not been edited).

*Laniarius ferrugineus*

Large puff backed Bush shrike

**Southern Boubou**

***(Laniarius ferrugineus)***

This bird make a round open nest of fine roots or creepers without any lining, one I found ... was situated between the thick reed on the bank of Limpopo and contained 3 eggs much incubated – another I found ...on a large branch of a tree standing on the bank of the river, it contained one young bird

**Nest:** *A scraggly, loosely knit bowl or cup, made of slender twigs, roots and grasses, sometimes bound with spider web, sometimes lined with fine grass and rootlets. Placed above ground in a fork of leafy tree, bush or hedge, near end of branch if nest can be concealed by dense foliage.*

**Eggs:** *2-3. Oval. Pale greenish white, lightly speckled with browns and greys; markings sometimes concentrated at obtuse end.*



Source: Wikipedia



1) *Lagonosticta minima*

Amadavat finch

**Red-billed Firefinch**

**(*Lagonosticta senegalensis*)**

The nest in a tuft of grass at the side of a dry water course, externally composed of coarse grass, lined with feathers of guineafowls and francolins, no cavity in the ground, and the nest put together so loosely that it could not be removed, but so artfully concealed and covered with grass that I could not find it - Eggs three in number White

**Nest:** Ball-shaped with side entrance. Outer shell built out of dry grass stems and some dry leaves, inner shell made of fine grass inflorescences. Lined with feathers...Placed 0-2 m above ground, usually below canopy of bush or tree where debris have accumulated

**Eggs:** 2-6. Usually 3-4. Oval, slightly pointed at one end. White.



Source: google.com.na

2) *Granatina granatina*

Grenadin finch

**Violet-eared Waxbill**

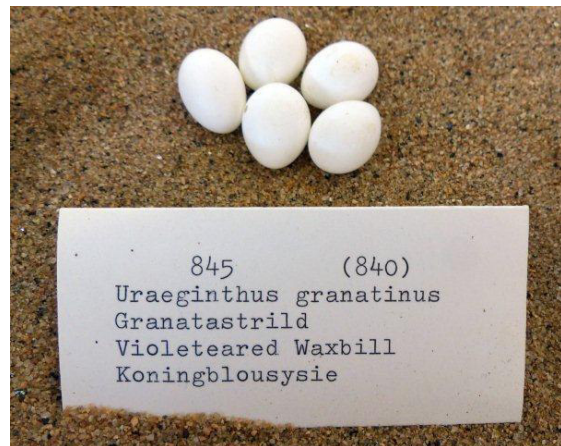
**(*Uraeginthus granatinus*)**

The nest in the thickest part of a thorn bush, about 4 feet from the ground - shape like a ball, with an opening on the side - composed of fine grass roughly put together and

only lined with these feathers - Eggs three - White

**Nest:** Thick-walled, oval ball of dry grass with long axis vertical, concealed by foliage. Outer part comprises mainly dry grass stems, with ends protruding untidily. Finer green grass inflorescences used for inner walls. Round entrance usually faces into bush. Lined with feathers. Placed 0.5-3 m above ground in shrub or tree.

**Eggs:** 2-7. Short oval. White.



3) *Scopus leucotis*

White faced scops owl

**Southern White-faced Owl**

**(*Ptilopsis granti*)**

The nest on a branch in a small tree - constructed of a few twigs loosely put together - egg could be seen between the interstices Eggs three in number pure white, very broad and equally rounded at bottom ends. Much incubated

**Nest:** Old stick nest of e.g. hawk, kite, heron, crow, dove, buffalo-weaver, Wattled Starling or Grey Go-away-bird, or platform (such as sparrow nest) 2-8m above ground

**Eggs:** Usually 2-4. Rounded oval. White, smooth-shelled.



4) *Coturnis communis*  
 European quail  
**Common Quail**  
*(Coturnix coturnix)*

The nests under small bushes in depressions of the ground lined with grass, in the three nests I found, the eggs varied from 9 to 12 in number of a yellowish ground thickly spotted with very small dark brown spots

**Nest:** In dense herbaceous and grassy cover, sometimes in crops or thorny shrubs. Female makes small scrape in the ground and pads nest with grass and rootlets. More lining material added during incubation.

**Eggs:** 2-14, usually 5-7. Pointed oval. Smooth, glossy, pale cream, yellowish or dark buff, sometimes fairly heavily speckled deep olive and/or reddish brown, with some blackish blotches.



Source:Wikipedia

5) *Crateropus bicolor*  
 Southern Black & white Babbler  
**Southern Pied Babbler**  
*(Turdoides bicolor)*

The nest in a hollow tree – Eggs three in number – colour blue but quite rough on the central part with numerous little tubercles

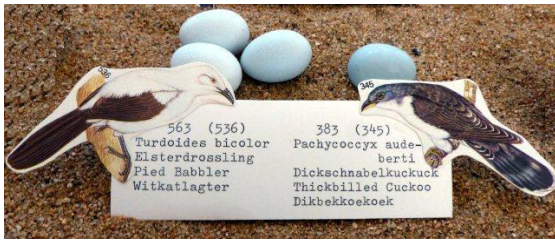
This nest was situated between a fork of a thick hakythorn tree about 6 feet from the ground – a strong deep circular structure, composed externally of coarse grass lined with finer. Eggs three smooth in the extremities – the rest rough with numerous little tubercles

**Nest:** Roughly made, large open bowl of long, dry grass stems, pliable creeper stems and thin twigs; lined with hair, rootlets and soft fibres.

**Eggs:** 2-5 usually. Long oval. Very pale bluish green, sometimes almost white, with fine surface modules, except at ends.







6) *Pomatorhynchus trivirgatus*  
 Three streaked bush shrike  
**Brown-crowned Tchagra**  
*(Tchagra australis)*

The nest in a small bush 2 feet from the ground, constructed of a few country grass roots and fibres, put together closely enough to prevent the eggs from falling through. Eggs three in number, white beautifully streaked and spotted with reddish brown and purple so as to form a kind of wreath round the thickest end, the central part and the frontal end have very few spots

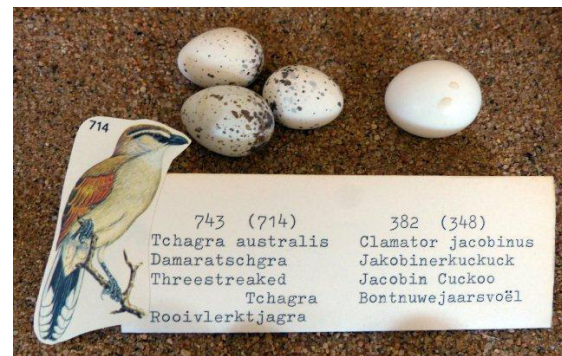
Nest in a small bush 2 feet from the ground, an open rough structure of fine stalks lined with a few grass roots. Contained three eggs of a delicate white ground colour streaked with purple thickest on the obtuse end where it almost form a wreath

Nest as usual cupshaped, composed externally of tops of grass fasten to together with cobwebs and lined with a kind of fine creepers that I have mistaken for grass roots, the eggs are elongated and tapering as much in one end, they are not streaked as others I have only spotted with minute brown spots chiefly on the obtuse end

**Nest:** A shallow, thin-walled cup of rootlets, fine twigs, leaf stems and coarse grass; usually lined with fine grass and/or feathers, and bound together with spider web.

**Eggs:** Oval. White to pinkish white, with blotches or streaks of dark

brown, grey or violet, markings concentrated at the obtuse end.



7) *Phasmaptynx Capensis*  
 African short eared owl  
**Marsh Owl**  
*(Asio capensis)*

Nest a cavity on the ground under a clump of grass, lined with fine grass. Eggs from three to five, pure white and more pointed than the eggs of *scops leucotis*. I have found nests from the 5<sup>th</sup> of February to the 11<sup>th</sup> of April

**Nest:** Slight depression or deeper bowl among dense grass or weeds, sparsely lined with dried foliage. Surrounding vegetation may be pulled over to form canopy.

**Eggs:** 2-6, usually 2-4. Rounded oval. Smooth, white.

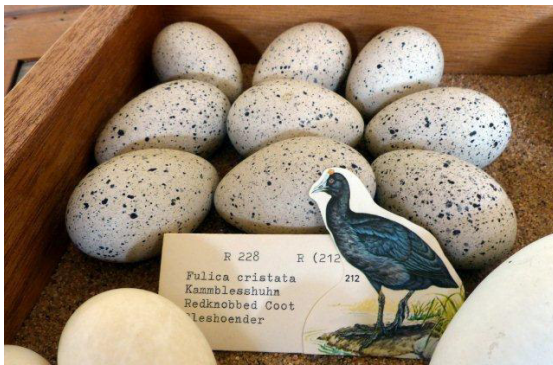
8) *Fulica cristata*  
 Rufous knobbed coot  
**Red-knobbed Coot**  
*(Fulica cristata)*

Nests floating amongst rushes in vleys, composed of a mass water

grass and plants roughly but firmly constructed and raised a couple of inches above water, The largest number of eggs I found was five but I do not think the birds had laid the full number, they were a creamy ground colour freely speckled with dark brown spots, some very small etched layer

**Nest:** Usually floating mound of sedge stems, grass, leaves and stems of Bulrushes, weed stems or reeds.

**Eggs:** Usually 2-6, rarely up to 10. Oval. Buff or yellowish stone, with small purplish-brown dots.



9) *Gallinula chloropus*  
Moor hen

**Common Moorhen**  
**(*Gallinula chloropus*)**

Nest constructed the same as the rufous knobbed coot floating amongst the thickest rushes Eggs three of a buff coloured ground colour, freely speckled with small brown spots and a few larger being darker brown

**Nest:** A shallow bowl of plant stems, sedges etc; Usually well concealed in or between sedges, reeds or Bulrushes, sometimes in lower branches of flooded tree; 150-250 mm above water.

**Eggs:** 4-9, clutches up to 11 possibly laid by two females.



10) *Gallinula angulata*  
South african lesser water hen  
**Lesser Moorhen**  
**(*Gallinula angulata*)**

Nest constructed of a mass of water grass, floating amongst the thickest rushes, some of the standing stalks bent down wards forming the foundation, the hollow in which the eggs are laid is about three inches deep The nest only contained one fresh egg; of a pale yellow colour, freely covered with small spots of brown, with here and there a larger spot of a rufous tinge.

**Nest:** Shallow grass cup on platform of bent-over live grass or sedge stems, with surrounding grass stems sometimes drawn together over nest to form canopy.

**Eggs:** 4-9, occasionally up to 10. Oval. Slightly gloss, pale cream of buff, distinctly marked with a few large, often angular blotches of red-brown, and sparsely speckled red-brown over a few underlying pale lilac markings.

11) *Sporopipes squamifrons*  
Scutellated finch  
**Scaly-feathered Finch**  
**(*Sporopipes squamifrons*)**

The nest in a thorn bush about 7 feet from the ground, having the appearance of a bundle of grass pitched in the bush, the entrance on



the side, being nearly hidden by the manner the grass is arranged, internally the nest was beautifully padded with feathers. Eggs four in number, slightly incubated, of a light bluish ground colour, thickly blotched with light brown especially at the thicker end.

**Nest:** *Hollow ball of pale dry grass stems and inflorescences, with spout-like side entrance ca 80 mm long. Often built of green stems of aromatic Pentzia bush, complete with flowers, possibly serving as fumigant to repel ectoparasites. Spout end to back wall. Placed 0.- 4.2 m above ground in thin branches in fairly large thorn bush or tree.*

**Eggs:** *2-7. Oval. Pale greenish, heavily clouded and spotted with greyish brown.*



12) Huhua verreauxi  
Verreaux's eagle-owl  
**Verreaux's Eagle-Owl**  
**(Bubo lacteus)**

The nest a large flattish structure composed of sticks and twigs firmly put together, without any linings of softer materials, it was situated on the highest branches of a large dry tree. Eggs two, pure white and rounded at both ends. Slightly incubated.

I took another nest also of the month of August four years ago, in the province of Angola, it was situated in a small tree about 12 feet from the ground and contained two small chicks and one egg.

**Nest:** *Most often on large, old or occupied, stick nest of another bird, incl. Sociable Weaver or Hamerkop.*

**Eggs:** *1-2, usually 2. Rounded oval. White*



13) Gyps Kolbii  
South African griffon vulture  
**Cape Vulture**  
**(Gyps coprotheres)**

The nest a large flat structure situated on the top branches of a

large tree, composed of sticks, it contained one young bird that could only be a couple of days old.

Saw a nearly fullgrown young bird, sitting in a nest, high up in a very large tree – he was very noisy and his screams could be heard very far.

**Nest:** *Bulky platform of sticks, twigs and dried grass worked into a firm mass, with shallow cup lined with smaller sticks and grass. Placed on cliff edge 15-150 m above base.*

**Eggs:** *Almost invariably 1, rarely 2. Broad oval, Off-white, very occasionally with pale rufous or purple marks.*

Note: This seems to be a case of misidentification by Eriksson, as his description fits better that of the White-backed Vulture:

**Nest:** *A stick platform lined with dry grass, sometimes green leaves. Usually placed on top of a tree canopy, sometimes below crown, 7-25 m above ground.*

**Eggs:** *Almost invariably 1, rarely 2; 1 record of 3 eggs. Broad oval, White to Off-white, usually plain, sometimes with red-brown and lilac spots and scrolls.*



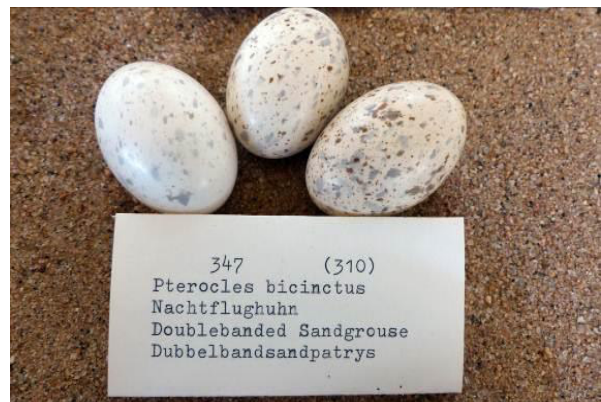
White-backed Vulture on nest

15) *Pterocles bicinctus*  
Double banded sand grouse  
**Double-banded Sandgrouse**  
**(*Pterocles bicinctus*)**

The eggs found on the sand amongst short grass – three in number of a reddish cream colour thickly spotted with small reddish brown spots, two of the eggs are bloched with darker brown chiefly in a ring round one end – much incubated – snared the male on the nest.

**Nest:** *A shallow scrape in soil, sand or gravel, usually lined with a few bits of dry plant material. Placed under a bush, between grass tufts or in the open.*

**Eggs:** *2-3. Elliptical, Pale salmon pink, cinnamon pink or pinkish buff spotted and streaked with purple brown or reddish brown and slate grey, the marks often concentrated at one end.*



16) *Chettusia coronata*  
Wreathed plover  
**Crowned Lapwing**  
**(*Vanellus coronatus*)**

Nest a mere depression in the sand – contained three eggs of a yellowish brown ground colour, bloched all over with a blackish brown and indistinct purple, chiefly in the obtuse and slightly incubated

A boy brought me three eggs today, like the above but of a more greenish



brown ground colour and the blotches larger

My ox watcher brought home three eggs today found on the ground in a depression, he saw the bird flying off and eggs much incubated

Took another nest today, contained four eggs, slightly incubated

**Nest:** Scrape in ground, lined with dried grass, roots, small stones and dried dung. On bare ground or among short vegetation, sometimes next to stone or mound of earth that disrupts outline of incubating bird.

**Eggs:** 2-3, occasionally 4. Pyriform. Dark yellowish buff to deep khaki or olive-brown, boldly spotted with black and grey, rarely white.



17) *Cherralopex egyptiacus*  
Egyptian Goose  
**Egyptian Goose**  
**(*Alopochen aegyptiacus*)**

A farmer found a nest today on a heap of decayed reed washed on a sandbank in the river, when the

water was high, the nest a mere depression contained two fresh eggs. White and much pointed in one end – A couple of days ago my driver found one of this geese with a brood of young ones swimming in the river

Found a nest on a small island - the nest a cavity thickly lined with down from the birds contained 8 eggs – white much incubated. Eggs small for the size of the bird

**Nest:** Female excavates ground nest by digging with feet. Nest material usually grass, reeds, leaves and down. Most nests close to water, but may be up to 3 km distant. Usually on ground, typically in dense vegetation or among rocks; often on small islands in water bodies.

**Eggs:** 1-22. Elliptical. Unmarked, white or creamy.



18) *Caprimulgus rufigena*  
Rufous cheeked goatsucker  
**Rufous-cheeked Nightjar**  
**(*Caprimulgus rufigena*)**

Nest a mere depression in the ground, without any lining – eggs two the one of a creamy white and the other of a dull salmon colour, profusely spotted and clouded with light reddish brown and indistinct purple

**Nest:** A shallow, natural depression in coarse soil, with or without stones nearby.

**Eggs:** 1-2, usually 2. Elliptical, Usually glossy, pinkish cream with pale reddish-brown and lilac markings. Less often, ground colour yellow to pale buff. Rarely, blotched, scrawled or pure white.

19) *Accipiter minullus*

Little sparrow hawk

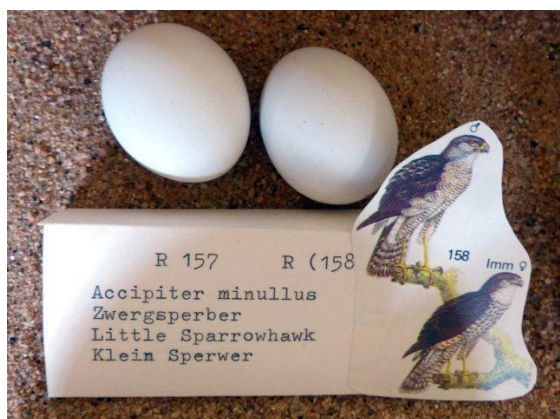
**Little Sparrowhawk**  
**(*Accipiter minullus*)**

One of my herds brought three hawk eggs and on his description of the bird it must be this kind – This time of the year we have only hereabout two kinds of hawks viz. *M. gabar* and *Ac minullus* of this the latter is most common – Nest composed of sticks situated in a mimosa tree – Eggs three of a chalky white ground colour much blotched and claudet with brown and dull greyish purple

**Nest:** A small, saucer-shaped stick platform, stoutest sticks at base. Sometimes fairly flimsy. Unlined or sparsely lined with green leaves.

**Eggs:** 1-3, usually 2. Oval. White, sometimes tinged greenish when fresh; becoming nest stained.

Note: Eriksson's egg description fits that of the Shikra and not the Little Sparrowhawk.



20) *Crateropus Jardinii*

Jardine's babbling thrush

**Arrow-marked Babbler**  
**(*Turdoides jardineii*)**

The nest a deep cupshaped structure – firmly constructed externally of coarse grass lined with a little finer. On my journey to Pretoria lately have I taken two nests, the one situated between the reeds the other in a small tree about 5 feet from the ground – both contained 5 eggs of a beautiful blue colour quite smooth – in this differing from *C bicolor* and *C Hartlaubi* who have rough eggs – All the eggs slightly incubated

**Nest:** Bulky mass of dry grass, twigs and stems with leaves still attached, and leaf petioles; lined with roots, fine fibres, dry grass and wiry tendrils. Placed 0.5 - 3.5 m above ground. Usually well hidden in dense foliage in bush or tree, pile of driftwood, reed bed, tall dense tuft of grass or cavity in dead tree.

**Eggs:** 2-5, usually 3. Long oval. Slightly glossy, turquoise or pale to deep greenish blue.; unmarked.

21) *Motocilla Vaillantii*

LeVaillants Wagtail

**African Pied Wagtail**  
**(*Motacilla aguimp*)**

Nest situated on a root of a small tree, standing on an island in the Limpopo – a cupshaped structure composed externally of fine roots and grass lined with long hairs and feathers Eggs two, much pointed in one end of a greyish ground colour, so thickly spotted all over with brown as nearly to hide the ground colour

**Nest:** A deep and bulky cup, with base composed of dry grass, weeds, stems, roots, leaves, flood debris, downy seeds, strings, rags or other coarse material; occasionally seaweed



and coconut fibres. Cup lined with fine grass, rootlets, hair or feathers. Usually built close to water, on ground, in grass tussock, reeds or other vegetation, including flood debris and tree stump over water.

**Eggs:** 2-5, usually 3-4. Oval. White, clouded with pale grey, speckled all over, with warm sepia.

22) *Laniarius ferrugineus*

Large puff-backed bush shrike

**Southern Boubou**

**(*Laniarius ferrugineus*)**

Makes a round open nest of fine creepers roots and fibres, one I found on the 15<sup>th</sup> October was situated between the reed on the bank of the Limpopo and contained 3 eggs much incubated, another I found on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of Nov. was situated in a fork of a tree overhanging the same river and contained one young bird -

**Nest:** A deep and bulky cup, with base composed of dry grass, weeds, stems, roots, leaves, flood debris, downy seeds, strings, rags or other coarse material; occasionally seaweed and coconut fibres. Cup lined with fine grass, rootlets, hair or feathers. Usually built close to water, on ground, in grass tussock, reeds or other vegetation, including flood debris and tree stump over water.

**Eggs:** 2-5, usually 3-4. Oval. White, clouded with pale grey, speckled all over, with warm sepia.

23) *Tockus flavirostris*

Yellow billed hornbill

**Southern Yellow-billed Hornbill**

**(*Tockus leucomelas*)**

A bushman brought a female with one egg, shortly after she laid another; The first egg was white, all over covered with a dirty brown, the second was covered with blood which

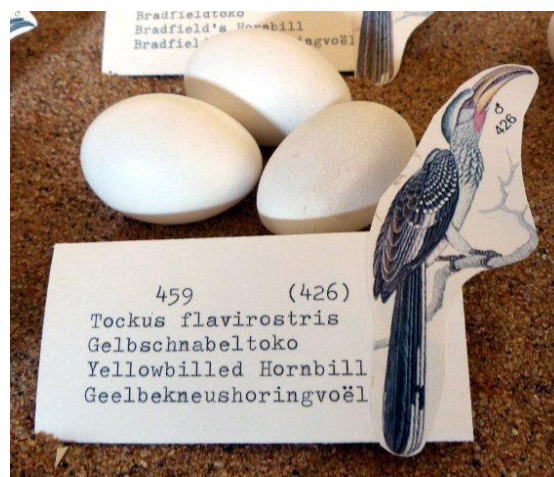
was drying fast quickly, but came off in the washing, the first egg I could not wash white. Nest as usual in a hollow tree and although it only contained one egg The male bird had masoned up the entrance, only leaving a small hole for him to feed his mate, The female had as yet all the wing and tail feathers.

One of the herds brought another of this birds female with two eggs, she had lost all her quills and tail feathers and the new feathers were about an inch long – Eggs much incubated. The usual number are three.

Some bushmen came today with three females, 2 eggs and six young birds the mother of the two eggs had as yet the quills and tailfeathers although the eggs were sat on, but the other two had none, bloodfeathers in the tail were about half an inch long but nothing could be seen of the quills. (Eggs dirty white)

**Nest:** Natural hole in tree, often facing north-east, 0.75 - 12m above ground, lined with dry foliage or small bark flakes brought mainly by the male.

**Eggs:** 2-6, usually 3-4. Oval, pitted. White



24) Turtle dove

*Turtur capicola*

**Cape Turtle Dove**  
**(*Streptopelia capicola*)**

Nest in a fork in a tree, a few twigs put flatly together merely to prevent the eggs falling through, Contained one white egg slightly incubated The dove have been breeding from September. The usual number of eggs is two

**Nest:** *Frail platform of twigs and petioles, with shallow depression lined with grass, rootlets or pine needles. Nest sometimes repaired and reused; may alternate nest use with Laughing Dove.*

**Eggs:** *1-2, rarely up to four. Oval. White, slightly glossy.*

25) *Schizorhis concolor*

Whole coloured Plantain eater

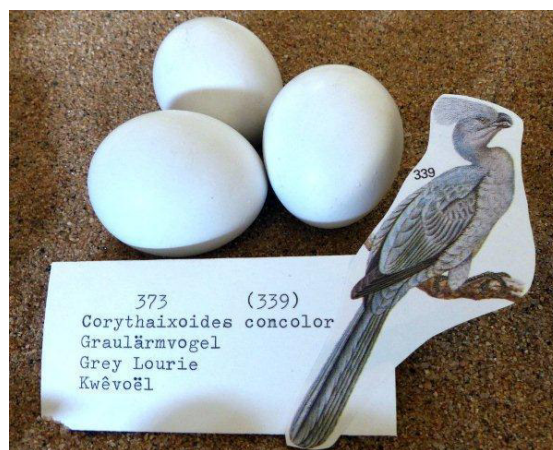
**Grey Go-away-bird**  
**(*Corythaixoides concolor*)**

Makes a rough nest, merely a few fine twigs put together in a fork of a tree, generally of a medium size Eggs three of a dull bluish white colour, rather large for the size of the bird. I could count the eggs standing underneath the tree.

A Kalahari brought three eggs taken out of a nest today, they were slightly incubated.

**Nest:** *Simple, rather flimsy platform, typically built of interlaced twigs,. Usually 3 - 10 m above ground, but 1,502 m recorded. Nests may be quite exposed. Marked preference for thorny trees.*

**Eggs:** *1-4 usually. Rounded oval, sometimes almost spherical. Pale bluish white, smooth-shelled, slightly glossy.*



26) *Plocepasser mahali*

White broad weaver bird

**White-browed Sparrow-Weaver**  
**(*Plocepasser mahali*)**

Several of this bird generally build in one tree, making a heart shaped nest line with grass and feathers, nearly all nests have two entrances from below, right in the middle where it is hanging over a branch and slanting down towards the two openings, it is a rough structure, and long ends of grass are sticking out in all directions, more so at one of the entrances. It always puzzled me how the eggs could remain in the nest. I inquired of the natives, they told me this is only their winter house and that when they wanted a house for breeding purposes they closes up one end.

Today 1<sup>st</sup> of December 1886 I noticed amongst of lot of nests one with only one entrance. Put in my hand and caught the female sitting on two beautiful eggs, of a pinkish white ground colour, marked with pinkish brown blotches (some indistinct) and darker pinkish brown spots, forming a very broad wreath at the thick end. This weaver bird remains the whole year close to these nests and sleep in them winter and summers.

I have examined a number of nests today, all have two entrances but no eggs, it is strange how difficult it is to



get eggs of this, the commonest bird we have, not a day passes that I don't see numbers of these nests.

Found another nest today with two eggs in, slightly incubated. This nest also only had one entrance and where the other ought to be was a hollow place where the eggs were laid.

**Nest:** *Untidy, retort-shaped dry grass nest has 2 entrances, but breeding pair may close 1 entrance, Usually 2-6 m above the ground. Favours thorn trees, possibly because nest is wedged, not woven into branches. Most often on leeward side of tree.*

**Eggs:** *1-3. Oval. White or pale pink, speckled and clouded to varying degree with dark pink, chestnut-brown and lilac grey; markings often concentrated at obtuse end.*



27) *Hyphantornis velatus*  
Black fronted weaverbird  
**Southern Masked Weaver**  
**(*Ploceus velatus*)**

Many of this birds build in the same tree on the very top of mimosa branches, makes a kidney shaped

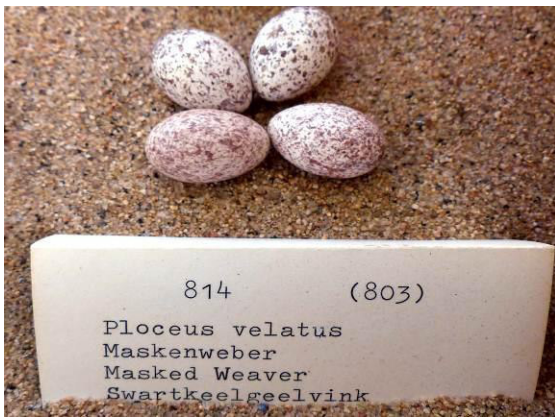
nest of green grass, with the entrance towards the upper end slanting downwards, at the entrance the grass is so arranged, as to form a low wall, no matter how the wind blows the nest about, the eggs can not fall out, the weaver birds is building every where about me, but strange not one nest can be found by the river, all are on the high dry ground, Perhaps on the trees to high and large by the river etc I can not understand it as on other places this bird is so fond of having its nest hanging near the water

I insided a large number of nests today; the most birds had not commenced laying, but in other nests I found one or two eggs, one nest contained 4 and another 5 in all I got 50 The colours were some spotless blue and or white, others blue green, white and creamed with red brown and purple spots and blotches, some very small others large

**Nest:** *Kidney-shaped, with large entrance on the underside; built of strips of grass or palm leaves. Built in tree, bush or reeds.*

**Eggs:** *1-6, usually 2-4. Oval to elongated oval. White, pink, pale green or blue, plain or spotted, spotted or blotched with grey, brown, red or purple.*





28) *Mirafra fringillaris*  
 Finchlike Lark  
**Monotonous Lark**  
*(Mirafra passerina)*

This lark makes its nest on the ground, in a tuft of grass, where it scratches a hollow about 3 inches in depth and line it with grass, afterwards it bends the grasses together over the nest, adds some more to it and makes the nest round and dome shaped, with one large opening at the side.

I have today taken three nests, one contained 2 and the others three eggs, the varied in colour, in one nest, they were of a light black ground all over clouded with minute spots of brown and indistinct greys, the others were of a creamy white ground colour, thickly spotted and blotched with light rufous brown and indistinct bluish grey, the latter colour only on the obtuse end, sometimes almost form a wreath

I have today found another nest containing three eggs, much incubated, they are of a light dull blue ground colour, thickly spotted and blotched with brown

My herds found two nests to day one had three eggs and the other four, four eggs seem to be an unusual number.

**Nest:** *Deep cup of grass, placed on ground against tuft or between 2 tufts of grass, sometimes with growing grass incorporated into walls, or bent over to form dome.*

**Eggs:** *2-4. Oval. White, heavily mottled or speckled with brown and grey-brown, with underlying slate speckles, markings sometimes concentrated at obtuse end.*

29) *Aëdon leucophrys*  
 White browed Aëdon  
**White-browed Scrub Robin**  
*(Cercotrichas leucophrys)*

Makes an open cupshaped nest of grass lined with roots, on the inner branches of a small bush, about one foot above the ground, and lays four eggs of a light blue ground, spotted with light brown, thickest on the obtuse end, where it almost forms a wreath.

One nest contained two fresh eggs.

Much incubated and thickly spotted all over the obtuse end.

Took another nest today containing three eggs, slightly incubated.

Took one nest and one contained three fresh eggs. Junction of Marico and Limpopo.

**Nest:** *Deep open cup made largely from dry grass blades; additional materials may include small twigs, dead Acacia leaves and bark flakes. Lining of ginger-coloured grass roots, grass flower heads. Preferred site is centre of grass tussock, often at base of small tree. Nests in grass tussocks 70 - 300 mm above ground, other sites 0.30 - 1.6 m above ground.*

**Eggs:** *2-4. Oval to elliptical oval, infrequently pyriform. Usually white, variably spotted or blotched with brown and some grey and mauve.*



Markings often form ring or cap at obtuse end, but sometimes evenly distributed.

30) *Turtur senegalensis*

Senegal Turtle Dove

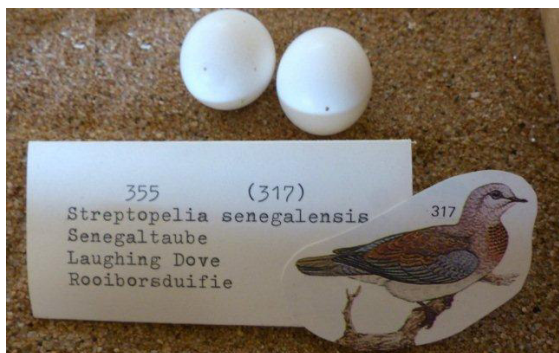
**Laughing Dove**

**(*Streptopelia senegalensis*)**

I have today found four nests one with only one egg in, but the other three had 2 each, all fresh – The nest is exactly of *Turtur capicola*, the eggs are of a delicate white colour, much smaller than the eggs of the Cape Turtle-dove and differs slightly in shape, not being so broad over the middle part and equally obtuse at either end.

**Nest:** Frail platform of twigs, leaf petioles and roots, with shallow central depression lined with finer material, usually rootlets.

**Eggs:** 1-4, exceptional 6. Oval. White, slightly glossy.



31) *Cisticola fasciolata*

Barred breasted Fantail

**Barred Wren-Warbler**

**(*Calamonastes fasciolatus*)**

On 7<sup>th</sup> December a boy found a nest and brought me to it, the nest was situated, a few inches from the ground, in a small, soft broad leaved shrub, resting on the stems, it was a very pretty structure, almost round, with the entrance towards the upper side, composed of silky white cotton lined with hairs, the broad leaves were fasten to the nest on all sides, so that nothing but green leaves could be seen, at first I could not understand how the birds could get the leaves to stick so fast to the nest, but after close examination I found numerous threads of cotton stuck through them. Contained three eggs with numerous minute dark spots distributed all over. I waited by the nest for some time but the birds did not come. I then left my driver there and told him not to fire, unless the bird comes very close to the nest, he waited for good an hour when the female of this bird came and shot her, the boy who found the nest also says it was this bird who flew out of the nest when he found it. I have some doubt about it, as the nest, have not the appearance of a finch nest, but of some warbler

One of my boys found another of these strange nests to day, containing four fresh eggs, as I was doubtfull of the correctness of the last identification, had to see the bird by the nest myself and waited till dark, but could not catch sight of him, I then put up a couple of snares by the entrance and succeeded during the night to snare the female. Nest externally camouflaged of fine broad leaves, inside of them laying some kind of silky cotton, by which the leaves were sewn fast, inside lining firm grass. Eggs blue thickly spotted with minute brown spots.

**Nest:** Thick-walled and ball-shaped, with side-top entrance. Entrance with firm lower rim, usually partly covered

by projecting leaf. Built of felted plant down and fine grass, sewn with spider web into living leaves of herb, shrub or small tree, which almost encase nest. Up to 4m above the ground, usually 1 - 3 m.

**Eggs:** 2-4. Oval. Slightly glossy, creamy white to bluish white, evenly speckled lilac and purplish brown.

### 32) *Cisticola chiniana*

Larger grey backed Fantail

#### **Rattling Cisticola** **(*Cisticola chiniana*)**

On Limpopo the 8<sup>th</sup> December 1886 I took a nest of this birds, it was situated in a small, but thick thornbush about 6 inches from the ground, and was round, with the entrance on the side, near the top, composed of grass lined with a few cobwebs. Eggs 4 white (Pinkish when the yolk was in) spotted with minute reddish spots, thickest on the obtuse end.

Took four eggs out of a nest today, The nest same as above but it was thicker lined with a kind of cotton – eggs were much incubated and larger than those yesterday, they were also more thickly spotted (Limpopo)

Found a nest today, contained 4 eggs quite fresh, they are of a light blue ground, the spots darker and not so numerous, as they generally are

Took four eggs out of a nest, pinkish when the yolk was in, bit light blue after they are more cleaned, spotted only on the obtuse end with minute reddish spots, nest as usual placed in a low thick thornbush, not far from the ground, loosely put together of coarse grass lined with a little unlike cotton from some plants, entrance on the side near the top.

**Nest:** Oval or ball-shaped, with side entrance. Made of dry grass leaves, bound with spider web. Placed 0.2-1.2 m above ground in dry grass tuft, mixed grass and shrub, fork of *Acacia* sapling, or foliage of fallen branch.

**Eggs:** 2-5. Oval. Slightly glossy, white, greenish-white, or pale to deep greenish blue, plain or speckled, spotted or blotched with red-browns and purplish grey over underlying slate speckles, markings often concentrated at obtuse end.



### 34) *Laniarius atrococcineus* Southern crimson-breasted Shrike **Crimson-breasted Shrike** **(*Laniarius atrococcineus*)**

This morning I found a nest of this shrike, containing two young birds, it was situated in a fork of a thornbush, about six feet from the ground, an open rough but firm structure, composed of bark from thorn trees, mostly the inner

**Nest :** A neat cup, built almost entirely of strips of bark collected from branches and trunks of *Acacia* trees by stripping the inside of bark peelings. Lined with rootlets and shafts from grasses; base secure to branches with spider web. Usually 1 - 8 m above ground in vertical fork in main stem, or where main stem and side branch diverge; less often horizontal or sloping fork.

**Eggs:** 2-3. Oval. Buff, very pale green, pale blue or (occasionally) white, speckled and spotted with browns and greys and with underlying slate or lilac. Markings often concentrated at obtuse end.





35) *Drymoica flavicans*  
 Black-chested grass warbler  
**Black-chested Prinia**  
**(*Prinia flavicans*)**

Nest attached to some branches in a bush, about four feet from the ground, a light, well closed in structure with a small entrance near the top, composed of fine but strong grass, curiously curled and twisted together, lined with very little white down, from some plants. Contained four very pretty eggs of a light bluish yellow colour, spotted, bloched and also streaked with rufous brown, purple and black, chiefly on the obtuse end.

Close to my camp by the junction of Marico and Limpopo, we found a pair of birds building. The 25 of December the first egg was layd and on the 28<sup>th</sup> the fourth, I then found the female in the nest, and found it was *D. flavicans*. The bird was quite as cunning as the other and although the nest was only about 70 yards from the camp, we seldom saw it, and if we did it dispersed as quickly, that it was impossible to identify with certainty. Nest and eggs like above.

This birds are not at all shy if they have not a nest close by.

**Nest:** *Thin-walled, oval or pear-shaped, with side-top entrance, woven or knitted of thin green grass leaves which dry to become firm and pale brown. Usually unlined, but sometimes lined with plant down, mostly after eggs have been laid. Placed 0.2 - 2.2 m(usually about 1 m) above ground in upright, upper stems of shrub, bush, sapling thorn tree, or tall grass. Favours Acacia spp and thorny Asparagus spp bushes.*

**Eggs:** *2-6. Oval. Slightly glossy. Buff, pale fawn, pale greenish blue or pale turquoise; blotched, scrolled, clouded and marbled with mauve, browns, greys and black.*



36) *Mirafra Sabota*

Sabota Lark

**Sabota Lark**

**(*Mirafra sabota*)**

Makes its nest on the ground, where it scratches a hollow under a tuft of grass, about three inches deep and line it with fine grass Lays three eggs of a light greyish ground colour, profusely speckled with brown and indistinct purple, the later colour chiefly on the obtuse end.

**Nest:** *Cup of dry grass lined with finer grass and rootlets. Built in scrape or hollow in ground against tuff of grass, shrub, under aloe leaves or sometimes against a stone, but seldom when well-shaded by vegetation. If scrape shallow nest rim sometimes raised above ground.*

**Eggs:** *2-4. Oval. White, speckled with brown, yellowish-brown and greyish-brown, markings often concentrated at obtuse end.*



37) *Lamprocolius phoenicopterus*

Nabirop glossy Starling

**Cape Glossy Starling**

**(*Lamprotornis nitens*)**

Found a nest today of this bird, in a hollow tree but unfortunately it contained young bird.

Took two eggs out of the nest in the hollow of a tree, the nest was well lined with fine grass and feathers, the

eggs are of a long oval shape tapering off much over one end, the colour blue, one egg is almost spotless, the other is freely marked with small indistinct light brown spots.

**Nest:** *Usually in natural cavity in tree, or in old woodpecker or barbet hole; also in hole in river bank. Material such as twigs used to fill hollow so that nest close to entrance hole. Dung, dry grass, and snake skin used to line nest; additional lining of feathers may be used during incubation.*

**Eggs:** *2-6. Clutch of 6 possibly from two females. Sub-elliptical. Pale greenish blue, speckled with red.*



38) *Turnix lepurana*

Kurrichane Hemopode

**Kurrichane Buttonquail**

**(*Turnix sylvatica*)**

Nest sheltered in a tuft of grass, a slight hollow lined with grass. Contained four eggs, very abruptly pointed, of a dirty cream colour and ground, densely spotted with indistinct purple light and dark brown.

I found a nest today containing four fresh eggs, Nest and eggs like above.

One of the herds brought home four eggs taken out of a nest, he saw the bird flying off, and assures me it belong to this bird, they differs from the others in being slightly larger, longer and not so abruptly pointed.

Great numbers of this bird are breeding everywhere about now. Yesterday and today I got 7 nests and had to tell the boys not to bring any more of this eggs, this bird lays 4 eggs, The bird lays four eggs every



contains this number if they are sat on.

**Nest:** Shallow scrape in soil, thinly lined with grass available within reach. Placed against grass tuft or between grass tufts.

**Eggs:** 2-4. Oval to pyriform. Smooth-shelled, whitish cream or pale buff to greyish or pale brown, heavily speckled all over with black, dark brown, grey, purple and yellow. A few to many black or brown spots may also be present, scattered all over the whole egg, or concentrated at the obtuse end. Colour and pattern of marking very variable, but always with a distinctly "dark brown" appearance.



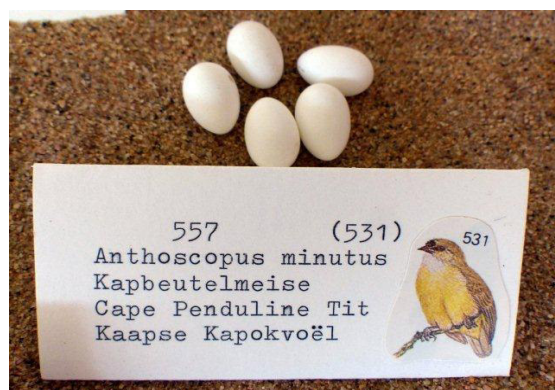
39) *Anthoscopus minutus*  
Dwarf blossom-pecker  
**Cape Penduline Tit**  
**(*Anthoscopus minutus*)**

This little bird makes a most wonderful nest, having the appearance of a ball of felted cloth, it has a tubular entrance near the top, underneath which is a pocket, used, the natives says as a sleeping place for the mate, This nest was suspended from the tip of a branch of as tree about 10 feet above the ground and contained five pure white eggs, slightly incubated.

**Nest:** An oval bag, built of plant down, especially pappuses of

*Asclepiadaceae*, Karoo rosemary (*Eriocephalus spp*) and Kapok Tree *Tatchonanthus camphoratus*, fur of hares and Angora goats, and sheep's wool. Usually whitish, but blackish where Karakul and Nama sheep occur, or patchwork of white, brown and black wool. Bound with spider web. Near top is a thin-walled, soft and collapsible entrance spout, below which is a small, curved ledge, used as perch by incoming bird as it opens entrance spout with one foot. Opening closes automatically, forming roof over ledge, creating "false" entrance.

**Eggs:** 4-7. Oval. Plain white.



40) *Mirafra africana*  
Rufous-naped Lark  
**Rufous-naped Lark**  
**(*Mirafra africana*)**

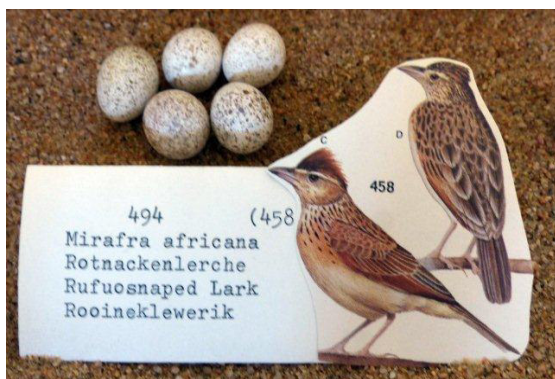
The driver brought three eggs and said they belong to this bird, he saw him flying off the nest, and know him well having shot several for me during last winter, Nest like one of



*Mirafra fringillaris*, a slight hollow lined with grass, sheltered by a tuft of grass, it was also arched. Eggs three very much incubated, of a pale creamy ground colour, spotted with light brown on the obtuse end they are blotched with dark brown and purple forming a dark wreath – they are also very much elongated, more so than any lark egg in my collection.

**Nest:** Partly or completely domed-over cup of dry grass, lined with rootlets and finer material. Built in deep scrape in ground at base of grass tuft or shrub.

**Eggs:** 2-3, rarely 4. Oval. Dull white to pale cream, spotted and blotched with grey, greyish brown, chocolate brown or yellowish brown, over underlying slate or ashy speckles, markings often concentrated at obtuse end.



41) *Urolestes melanoleucus*  
South Afr. Long-tailed Shrike  
**Magpie Shrike**  
**(*Urolestes melanoleucus*)**

Took three fresh eggs out of a nest today, they are of a straw yellow ground colour, spotted with light brown and dark purple, thickest on the obtuse end. The nest made of a kind of fine creeper that when dry looks like grass roots, a large open structure, eggs could be seen from below between the interstices, it was situated on one of the highest branches of a tree

**Nest:** A bulky, untidy cup of grass stems, twigs and roots, lined with finer roots. Typically placed 3-5 m up in indigenous Acacia, either in dense foliage or shrubby tree, or in upper outer branches of tall spreading tree, such as Umbrella Thorn, *Acacia tortilis*.

**Eggs:** 2-6. Oval. Buff or yellowish stone, speckled and spotted with reddish brown, dark brown and grey, markings usually concentrated at the obtuse end,

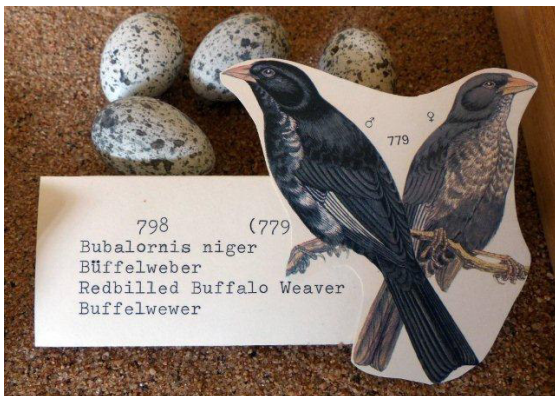
42) *Bubalornis erythrorhynchus*  
Buffalo weaver bird  
**Red-billed Buffalo Weaver**  
**(*Bubalornis niger*)**

This birds breed in colonies, constructing two, three, and sometimes more nests in the same tree, the nests consists externally of an immense mass of dry thorny twigs, in which are found several separate nests. On the Limpopo they seems to prefer a large tree called by the boars Harde coal bom (hard coal tree) for the purpose Yesterday I saw a colonie, building and chattering away in the best of spirit, on a very large and high harde coal baum, in the same tree on the next branch, was a nearly fullgrown Griffon vulture sitting in his nest making a great noise, for the parents to bring food, but the weaver birds took no matter of it, nor did they show any fear when the old vultures came.

**Nest:** A bulky mass of interlaced thorny twigs divided into "lodges", nest chambers with short tunnel entrances. Birds continually add material to nest mass, which may grow to limits of supporting branches. Placed in branches of large, often thorny tree, sometimes on dead tree surrounded by water, or on windmill or high tension power pylon. White-backed Vulture and Bateleur

frequently built nests on top of Red-billed Buffalo-Weaver nests. This thought to be mutualistic, effectively camouflaging the raptor nest and providing some protection for the buffalo-weavers.

**Eggs:** 2-4. Oval. White to pale blue or dull greenish white, thickly and evenly speckled, spotted and blotched with grey, olive and browns.



43) *Euplectes taha*  
Taha Bishop bird  
**Yellow-crowned Bishop**  
**(*Euplectes afer*)**

This birds breeds amongst the rushes in vleys and swamps, making a bag shaped nest, suspended between the tall grass or rushes, the nest is composed of fine grass, woven closely together, the rushes are firmly fastened to the nest all round. Contained three fresh eggs, but the bird had not layed the full number, they are white, sprinkled all over with minute blackish dots.

**Nest:** Oval ball of thin grass strips with side-top entrance, roof partly

constructed with live grass stems bent over to form concealing screen over entrance. Nest supported by vertical grass sticks, rarely in small bush, generally in wet area. Often 0.15 - 0.40 m above water surface, rarely up to 0.7 m, usually well hidden.

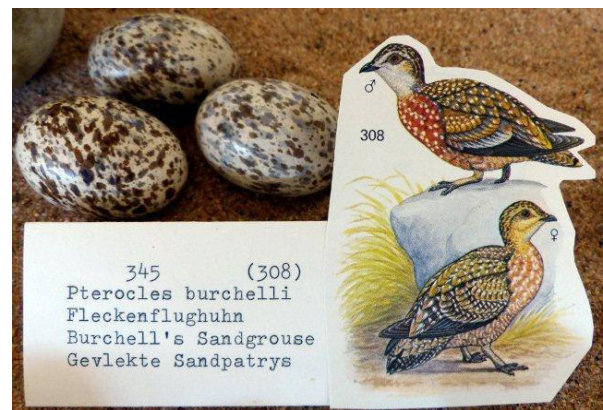
**Eggs:** 2 - 4. Oval. Dull white, with fine dark spots, markings often concentrated at obtuse end.

44) *Pterocles variegatus*  
Variegated Sand grouse  
**Burchell's Sandgrouse**  
**(*Pterocles burchelli*)**

One of the hunters brought three grouse eggs that he said belong this bird, he saw the hen flying off the nest, eggs laid on the bare sand in a small depression, like other sandgrouses, they are of a dull greenish colour, thickly blocked and spotted with light brown, oblong and rounded equally in both ends.

**Nest:** A shallow scrape in sandy soil, sparsely lined with dry plant material probably accumulated gradually through the nesting period or sometimes unlined. Usually placed next to a grass tuft or shrub.

**Eggs:** 3, rarely 2. Elliptical. Pale cream, olive cream or buff, with elongate smears of dark olive-brown and underlying blotches of greyish mauve; some eggs sparsely marked, appearing pale.



Note: My gratitude and appreciation to Neil Thomson for editing the text.

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Reference:

Hockey PAR, Dean WRJ, Ryan PG (eds) 2005 *Roberts Birds of Southern*