

SHORT NOTE

Redheaded Weavers nesting in the Etosha National Park

by

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In the past, a number of ornithological visits have been made to the northern parts of South West Africa/Namibia, resulting in publications on the avifauna of this region (e.g. Roberts, 1937; Hoesch and Niethammer, 1940; MacDonald and Hall, 1957; Winterbottom, 1971). Most of these expeditions visited Etosha National Park, and Clinning and Jensen (1976 & 1977) paid particular attention to this area. The Redheaded Weaver *Anaplectes rubriceps* is not mentioned by the above authors as occurring in Etosha National Park, nor is it shown for this area in the popular field guides (e.g. Mackworth-Praed and Grant, 1963; McLachlan and Liversidge, 1978; Newman, 1983).

In January 1981 a small colony of Redheaded Weavers was reported some 15 km south of the Namutoni rest-camp (C. Haagner, pers. comm.). On visiting the site, 13 nests were found in a stand of mopane trees *Colophospermum mopane* around a small clearing. The nests were between four and five metres above the ground and attached to the end of thin branches. In contrast to Masked Weavers *Ploceus velatus*, the leaves at the lateral ends of the branches to which the nests were attached were not stripped off but woven into the nesting material (Plate 1). This is said to provide a rainproof cover (McLachlan and Liversidge, 1978). Although unmistakably retort-shaped with a short entrance spout, the nests were not considered to be remarkably neat. However, as the colony was visited after the breeding season (recorded as October to December, McLachlan and Liversidge, 1978) some deterioration of the nests would have undoubtedly taken place. When the site was revisited six weeks later, no sign of the nests could be found. The birds were reported to have removed all the nesting material (D. and J. Bartlett, pers. comm.), this perhaps explaining why so few breeding records exist for this species.

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