

SHORT NOTE

Nesting association between Groundscraper Thrush *Turdus* *litsipsirupa* and Fork-tailed Drongo *Dicrurus adsimilis*

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Nesting associations between birds and other living things (including other birds) have been described for many species (Talent 1937, Moreau 1942, Durango 1949, Walsh & Walsh 1976). In Africa the association of waxbills with wasps nests and several weaver species of the genera *Malimbus* and *Ploceus* with a variety of raptors are well known. An association between Groundscraper Thrushes and Fork-tailed Drongos does not appear to have been previously described. Present observations on such an association were made by CFC at Daan Viljoen Game Park, South West Africa (22°38'S, 16°58'E) in 1969/70 and by WRT at and near Nylsvley Nature Reserve, Transvaal (24°29'S, 28°42'E) in 1974/75.

At Daan Viljoen three active Groundscraper Thrush nests were found in the 1969/70 breeding season and all three were situated close to active Fork-tailed Drongo nests, two in the same tree and one in an adjacent tree. A fourth Groundscraper Thrush nest was found in 1974 near Daan Viljoen by R. Jensen (pers. comm.) and was in a tree adjacent to (45 m away) an active Fork-tailed Drongo nest. Five other nest records from South West Africa were not associated with drongo nests.

In two successive summers (1974/5 and 1975/6) at Nylsvley 32 active drongo nests and seven active Groundscraper Thrush nests were found. Six of the latter were probably the efforts of one pair of birds (the male was colour-ringed in December 1974 and the female in October 1975) which frequented the area around a homestead. They made three nesting attempts in 1974 and three in 1975. Five of the six nests were placed close to active drongo nests, ranging from 4—15 m away ($\bar{x}=9$ m). Two were in the same tree as the associated drongo nest and three in an adjacent tree. Figure 1 shows the positions of the respective thrush and drongo nests and Table 1 gives the chronology of each of the nesting attempts.

The thrushes laid three clutches of eggs in 1974 and one in 1975 and none were successful. The drongos raised young from their only nesting attempt in 1974 and were unsuccessful in all three of their 1975 nesting attempts. In none of the nests was the cause of nest failure ascertained.

The habit of Groundscraper Thrushes nesting in association with Forktailed Drongos is widespread, as evidenced by its occurrence both in Transvaal and South West Africa. In Transvaal five out of seven thrush nests were associated with drongo nests and in South West Africa four out of nine. The Transvaal sample is biased since all five associations were (probably) by the same thrush pair. The nesting efforts of this pair showed clearly that thrushes sought the association, not drongos. In five cases the associated drongo nest was already present when the thrushes commenced nest-building; in the sixth case (their first nest of 1975) the thrushes commenced building a nest about a month before the drongos started breeding, and the nest was deserted without being used.

The association between weavers and raptors and waxbills and wasps has generally assumed that the one affords protection to the other against predators (Moreau 1942, Walsh & Walsh 1976). It is well known that drongos are pugnacious towards predators (eg McLachlan & Liversidge 1969) and very bold when defending their nest (eg Gill 1950). Thrushes nesting close to nesting drongos will probably benefit from the drongos pugnacity towards predators, although the present observations provide no data to support this.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Transvaal Nature Conservation Division and South West Africa Division of Nature Conservation and Tourism gave permission to the respective authors to publish this note.

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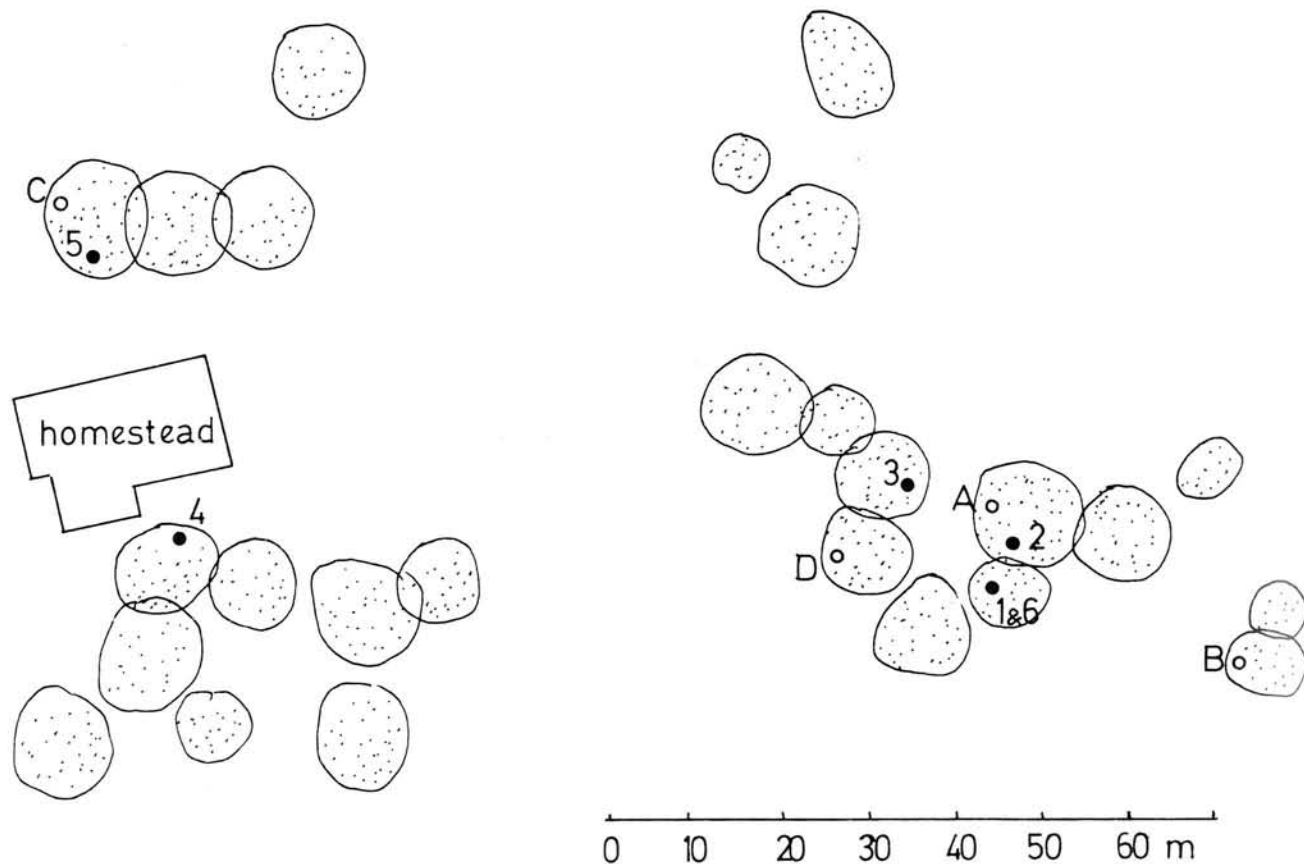


Figure 1. Positions of Fork-tailed Drongo nests (open circles, lettered A to D) and Groundscraper Thrush nests (solid circles, numbered 1 to 6) near Nylsvley Nature Reserve, Transvaal. The stippled shapes are individual trees.

	SEPTEMBER			OCTOBER						NOVEMBER						DECEMBER								
	20	25	30	5	10	15	20	25	30	5	10	15	20	25	30	5	10	15	20	25	30			
1974																								
drongo A	/	B	/		E		/	Y		//	Fledged													
thrush 1	//		B	//	E	//	Failed																	
thrush 2										/	B	/E	//	Failed										
thrush 3										/	B	/E	//	Failed										
1975																								
drongo B										/	B	/E	//	Failed										
drongo C										/	B	//	E	/	Failed									
thrush 4	//	B	//	deserted																				
thrush 5										/	B	/E	//	Failed										
drongo D										//	B	//	E	/	Y	//	Failed							
thrush 6										//	B											/	deserted	

Table 1. Chronology of Fork-tailed Drongo and Groundscraper Thrush nests near Nylsvley Nature Reserve, Transvaal. Stages of each nesting cycle are denoted by: B — building, E — eggs, Y — young. The start and end of each stage is indicated by a single diagonal line (for estimated dates) or a double diagonal line (actual dates).