

IN BRIEF

A lot can be learnt about bird behaviour if you have the opportunity to watch a nest. Small birds may nest in creepers around a verandah and in this sort of situation the birds can get quite tolerant of quiet observation. If you do get the opportunity to watch closely, keep a record of what you observe so that you can pass on to others all the fascinating information that you will acquire.

The sort of things you could record could include:

- the material used to build the nest
- the building rates (number of trips per hour) and the length of time taken to complete the nest
- the duration of the incubation period (time from laying to hatching)
- the duration of the nestling period (time from hatching to first flight)

Nest Watching



- a description of parental behaviour and development of the young
- a description of the greeting and change-over displays
- the length of the incubation and brooding stints by each adult
- a description of the food being presented - what it is and how much of it
- the feeding rates (number of feeding visits per hour)
- the contribution of the male and female to different stages of the cycle (building, incubation, nestling and after first flight)

- whether the type of activity or its rate are influenced by the time of day, or the weather
- a description of the calls of both adults and young, and in what circumstances they were used.

Although this all looks rather complex, it is simply a matter of taking careful field notes each time you watch. Note down the start and finish time of each observation session, and also note the time of the start and finish of each significant behaviour or activity, and any other relevant details. Each day's entry in your note-book should commence with the date and weather. Then, when you have finished a session of watching, it is just simple arithmetic to calculate, for example, the building rate, or the percentage of the observation time spent by each adult in various activities.

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