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## COOPERATIVE BREEDING IN THE AFRICAN PARADISE FLYCATCHER

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## COOPERATIVE BREEDING IN THE AFRICAN PARADISE FLYCATCHER

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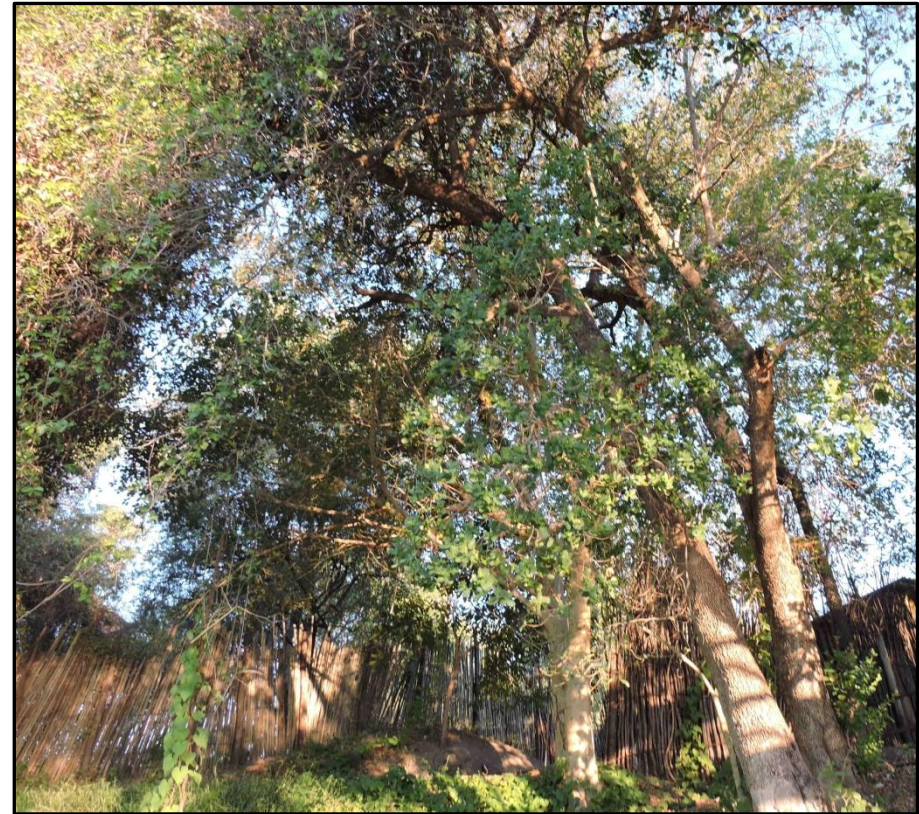
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The breeding season of the African Paradise Flycatcher *Terpsiphone viridis* in Southern Africa takes place mainly from September to December. The female lays up to four eggs and the incubation takes from 11-19 days and it is shared between the members of the pair. The female does most of the night sitting on the eggs (Roberts 2012).

The present observations were performed during two days of watching an African Paradise Flycatcher nest located at about three metres from ground level at a shady area near the jetty of Camp Kwando, Zambezi region, Namibia (S17°59' E023°17').

The observations presented did not follow any methodology as they were part of a general bird-watching trip. However, the fact that the birds were seen on a nest in an area of easy access (Fig 1) offered an excellent opportunity for observation and photography.

The activity described was observed during 25 and 26 November 2015 but the birds were also seen flying and perched in the general area surrounding the nest. The two birds that were observed sitting on the nest were both males, an adult and a sub-adult. As we were not able to identify individuals, there could have been more involved, though this seems unlikely. The nest contained at least one egg.



**Fig 1** - The area in which the African Paradise Flycatchers were observed.

No females were seen at any time neither sitting on the nest nor flying or perched in the vicinity.

On 25 November 2015 the adult (Fig 2.) was observed sitting from 07:05 to 07:27; the adult was observed sitting from 13:05 to 13:06 again and then the sub-adult (Fig. 3) was seen from 13:07 to 13:09. Later, the adult was seen from 17:48 to 18:11 and the sub-adult from 18:34 to 18:38. On 26 November 2015 the sub-adult was



**Fig 2** - The adult African Paradise Flycatcher incubating.

seen at 07:16 and the adult from 07:42 to 07:43.

Please note that these times are not total times but times when the birds were observed. They could have been there earlier and remained later than the time of the observations.

Roberts (2012) describes male and female sharing the incubation giving times of day and other details. It also mentions cooperative breeding as possible but unconfirmed but the latter is well known and studied in several other bird species (Stacey *et al.*, 1990).



**Fig 3** - The sub-adult African Paradise Flycatcher on the nest.

Although this could be an isolated observation and a rather anecdotal one, it unequivocally shows the involvement of a second male, strongly suggesting that cooperative breeding in the African Paradise Flycatcher takes place. It is possible that the young male was from the previous year and assisting the adult male.

It is also interesting that no female was observed close to the nest during the time the observations were made and at other times when we were present in the camp. Whether this had any influence on the observed behaviour could not be ascertained. The female could have

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been at the nest during periods that we did not observe, including during the night.

The easy accessibility of the nest could be amenable to further observations either now or in the future to corroborate our finding.

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### References

**Roberts 2012.** Roberts VII Multimedia Birds of Southern Africa iPad Edition, 2012-2013.

**Stacey PB, Koenig WD 1990.** Cooperative Breeding in Birds: Long Term Studies of Ecology and Behaviour. Cambridge University Press. p.636.