

SHORT COMMUNICATIONS

FINFOOT EATING SNAKE On 27 April 1980 at the Hippo Pools in Nairobi National Park, I watched a Finfoot *Podica senegalensis* feeding for about 20 min from 17:30 hrs. In addition to insects on the water, it was seen to 'test' leaves (and other floating vegetable matter) before discarding them. At one point the bird struck sharply and caught a small green snake *Philothamnus* sp. about 50 cm long. Holding the snake about 15 cm behind the head, the Finfoot proceeded to rap the head fifteen to twenty times against a low-hanging branch until the head hung limp. It then swallowed the snake head first and began to hunt along the edge of the bank for other prey.

Mackworth-Praed & Grant (1957), Bannerman (1953), Clancey (1964), and others give the food of the Finfoot as consisting of crabs, snails, prawns, shrimps, millipedes, beetles, dragonflies, grasshoppers, fish, small frogs, and molluscs but with no mention of snakes.

REFERENCES

BANNERMAN, D.A. 1953. *The birds of West and equatorial Africa*. Edinburgh & London: Oliver & Boyd.

CLANCEY, P.A. 1964. *The birds of Natal and Zululand*. Edinburgh & London: Oliver & Boyd.

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LITTLE RINGED PLOVER *CHARADRIUS DUBIUS* AT LUANSHYA, ZAMBIA On 10 November 1979 at 10:40 hrs I visited Makoma Sewage Ponds, Luanshya (13°07'S, 28°22'E) just after heavy storms had passed over. Two *Charadrius* were standing in short grass and, as I approached, both birds called, one giving the typical melodious tooi of Ringed Plover *C. hiaticula* and the other a high-pitched pee-u, immediately recognizable as the call of the Little Ringed Plover *C. dubius*. The birds flew up and circled together for some minutes, sometimes flying past me only a few metres away. After landing briefly, they flew out and did not return.

Light conditions were becoming good, with full sunlight at the ponds, and I obtained very good views of the birds with x10 binoculars. Both birds were adults and the Little Ringed Plover was easily identifiable by its smaller size, lack of white wing-bar, head pattern (white line above the black mask and frontal band), flesh-coloured legs and dark bill. Full details of the sighting are on file at the Zoological Museum, Tring, England.

Although my observations lasted for no more than 10 min, I am certain that my identification was correct. I have seen the species on many occasions in Britain, and the Luanshya bird's association with the Ringed Plover gave an excellent opportunity to compare the two species.

The Little Ringed Plover has been recorded in East Africa south to central Tanzania. In Kenya it is regular in small numbers, occurring mainly at inland localities (Backhurst, Britton & Mann 1973, and recent East African Bird Reports published in *Scopus*), but in Uganda it appears to be scarce (Jackson 1938, D.J. Pearson and D.A. Turner pers. comm.). There have been no previous records from Zambia but in view of its distribution in East Africa its occurrence in Zambia is not unexpected.

REFERENCE

BACKHURST, G.C., BRITTON, P.L. & MANN, C.F. 1973. The less common Palaearctic migrant birds of Kenya and Tanzania. *Journal of the East Africa Natural History Society and National Museum* 140: 1-38. [*Scopus* 4: 69, September 1980]

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