

The adult Fiscal is, as I have said, a conspicuous black and white bird, black above with a noticeable white wing bar, a grey rump and a long, much graduated, black tail, the shorter feathers being tipped with white. The whole underside is white. In the juvenile the upper parts are chestnut mottled with black, with a slightly lighter bar across the wings, while the underside is lightly barred with brown-black.

In its habits the West African Fiscal is a typical Shrike, usually perching in plain sight on a low branch or a bush a few feet from the ground. From this vantage point it makes periodic dives into the grass in search of grasshoppers and the like, on which it feeds. It is a silent bird, the only noise which I have ever heard it make being a low hissing sound.

I found a nest at Ado-Ekiti in April; it was in a lime tree close to one of the houses. The nest, which was about ten feet from the ground, was a shallow cup made of grass roots and cotton seed, into which had been woven various oddments, including some scraps from *The Times*. It was lined with grass and contained four pale grey blue eggs lightly spotted all over with light brown and having a broad band of purplish brown spots round the widest part. During the same month, while on tour, I saw another bird carrying materials to an almost completed nest. The materials used were the same, except for the scraps of *The Times*, a copy of which may not have been available, as the nearest European lived some twenty miles away!

West African Just So Stories

No. 11. Why the Elephant has such small eyes, and Why the Millepede has none

ONE day by accident Tortoise found some white palm kernels. He went off with them to the market road where he sat down to wait for someone to pass. Elephant was the first to come that way, and as soon as he was near, Tortoise muttered to himself, "These are the sweetest things I have ever tasted," and with that he popped the kernels into his mouth and began to munch them. "What are you eating?" asked Elephant. "Eyes," said Tortoise. "I want some too," said Elephant. "Then do like me. Pluck your own out. If you pluck them both out, two more will grow in their place. Look at me, my two eyes have just grown since I pulled out the two that I am now eating."

Elephant thought this was a good idea, but said, "I do not think I can get mine out." "Never mind," said Tortoise, "I will get them out for you

if you will lend me a knife." "Ow!" roared Elephant as the first eye came out. "It is no use shouting," said Tortoise, "you will never grow a new pair unless you have them out."

So Elephant allowed Tortoise to remove the other eye. Tortoise then tied Elephant to a tree, put the eyes into his bag and ran off with them.

The next person to come that way was Millepede. Now Millepede was a quiet, kindly individual. "Who is that?" asked Elephant. "Millepede," was the answer. "Well, Millepede," said Elephant, "trouble has descended upon me. I have become all mixed up in these ropes and cannot free myself because I have lost my eyes. Be a good fellow, lend me your eyes so that I can see to untie myself, and I will return them when I am free." So Millepede lent his eyes to Elephant. But when Elephant was free he ran off without returning the eyes to their owner; and that is why to this day the Elephant has such small eyes and the Millepede has none.

No 12. Why Frogs Croak

In the days of long ago the Frogs decided that they wanted a King of their own, so they called a meeting to discuss the matter. They finally agreed to ask God to give them a King, and went to see God himself about it. God did not agree with the idea, and said that so long as the Frogs continued to be independent of kings, they would have no one to give them trouble. He sent them away, but they were not satisfied. They came again and again with their request until God promised to send them a King. So God sent the Frogs a log of wood which floated on the surface of their pond.

Now the Frogs were unaware that their King was not alive. They swam up to their King and spoke to it. But the King did not answer. They pushed the log, and even jumped upon it, but they got no satisfaction. The Frogs went to God to complain about their King, but God only said that they were lucky to have a King that did not trouble them. The Frogs were still dissatisfied, and kept on begging for a King. They said that they wanted someone who could talk to them, and tell them when they were doing wrong, and give them good advice. They kept on begging until God was completely confused, and promised to send them a King who was alive. So God sent the Heron to the frog ponds.

As soon as the Heron arrived he started to eat the Frogs one after another. The foolish Frogs were terrified, and with one accord they started to shout to God for mercy. They begged God to take away the Heron, but the Heron remained, and the Frogs continued their incessant cries until their voices cracked, and they could only croak. This story tells you why it is that Frogs croak, but it should also be a lesson to you, to be content in this life with the things you have, and not to want the things you have not.