

**Doon Watch Nature Series for Dehradun Live Hindustan Times  
by Sanjay Sondhi**

Published on 13 August 2010

**The Baya Weaves A Spell!**

Less than twenty meters from our house, a wonderful "bird" story has been unfolding. Six weeks ago, on a palm tree in our housing society, I noticed some bird activity. Weaver birds! The bird was the Baya Weaver *Ploceus philippinus*, a lovely yellow, black and brown sparrow-like bird.

Standing below the tree, I counted five excited, chattering males. They had just starting weaving their nests! Over the next few days, I watched the birds at work. The



weaver birds would strip the thin fronds of the palm tree leaves, and use them as nest material. Hanging down from the branches, eventually the bulbous-looking nests began to take shape. The males would sit on the incomplete nest, hanging adroitly, sometimes, comically upside down, working feverishly, in a race to complete the nest. Every now and then the bird would enter the nest to check it out from the inside. Is the paint OK? Colour? Shape? Design? What else will the female like?

It was clear that a competition was on! Every now and then the male would step back to examine what the other males around him were doing. And every one of them always considered their own nest to be superior, hence had a smug look on their face!

Twenty days have passed. The green nests of the Baya Weavers have turned brown, as the fronds have dried up. Only one nest is occupied, with a proud male sitting on it, while his "wife" is inside. Getting a female to select a nest and mate is an elaborate task for the male. Females are picky (don't we know!). She examines many nests, and picks only the one she likes. Hence four out of the five nests on the palm have not met with any success and have been abandoned! The males, perhaps inexperienced, could not find a mate. Or maybe, the females were too fussy (the more likely scenario!). Better luck next next year!

Ten more days. The male has vanished. Males are polygamous, and will probably be building a new nest to attract another wife, somewhere else. Only the female remains. Inside the nest, the chatter of young ones can be heard when the female brings them insects to feed on. Otherwise, there is silence-ensuring predators are not attracted to the nest. The chatter of the young ones gets more vigorous as the days pass, and they grow. Soon the young ones will emerge, take to wing and continue the wondrous cycle of life.

Sanjay Sondhi is a Dehradun based naturalist. Feedback on this column is welcome at [sanjay.sondhi1@gmail.com](mailto:sanjay.sondhi1@gmail.com)

© Sanjay Sondhi

Making a difference: Being eco-friendly means beginning at home! The next time you buy furniture, ensure its made from eco-friendly material such as bamboo, lantana and even cane, instead of wood. Bamboo and cane are naturally occurring material, but can be replenished quickly, while Lantana is an invasive pest-the less of it, the better!