

*Nature stories for young readers*

**BIRDS OF  
DIFFERENT FEATHERS**

**VIDYA AND RAJARAM SHARMA**





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# BIRDS OF DIFFERENT FEATHERS

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*Vidya*  
**Online**

A PARTNERSHIP FOR TEACHERS, CHILDREN AND EDUCATION



*The story is based on observations made in Sanjay Van, part of South Delhi's Ridge forest, in the months of May - July 2010. The Orioles started their nest on 30th May and the first chick left on 11th July.*

*Photographs in this book may not show the actual size of birds or their nests.*



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**“Stop!” I cried.**

**Two yellow birds were zipping past trees chasing a Crow. They drove the Crow out into the open sky and returned quickly. Both looked anxious. They kept looking around uttering sharp harsh calls.**

**I had not seen these birds before. One of them was bright yellow and black. The other was**





duller, more yellowish green. They were big birds but not as big as a Pigeon.

“Why were you chasing the Crow?” I asked hesitantly.

No reply.

When I was about to give up, the duller of the two said softly, “I am Mother Oriole. This is Father Oriole. And that is our Firstborn.”

**“Oh!” I said, “But where is your firstborn?”**

**No reply again.**

**And then I spotted a CHICK! Valiantly trying to scramble up a dead bush. It had an untidy head and a stubby tail, and looked a bit like Mother Oriole. “That must be their firstborn!” I shouted, excited at my discovery.**

**Mother Oriole saw me noticing her chick.**





“You’re right. That’s our chick. There is one more up there in the nest,” she said.

“Up where?”

Taking the hint, Father Oriole flew up to a nest in a Siris tree.

The nest was really UP! I would never have spotted it by myself. I narrowed my eyes to see better and cursed myself for not bringing my binoculars.

The nest was in a fork at the end of a high branch. It was deep and looked like a small cradle made out of dried grass and reeds. I was amused to see a plastic bag interwoven with grass. Imagine. Birds using plastic! As I stood there admiring, I felt a bit puzzled.

“Hey! Your chick can’t fly! I saw him jump. No hop. No climb. Oh! Whatever. How... how...”

“He fell, you see...” said Mother Oriole with





great pride, even before I could finish.

“WHAT!” I exclaimed, not allowing her to complete.

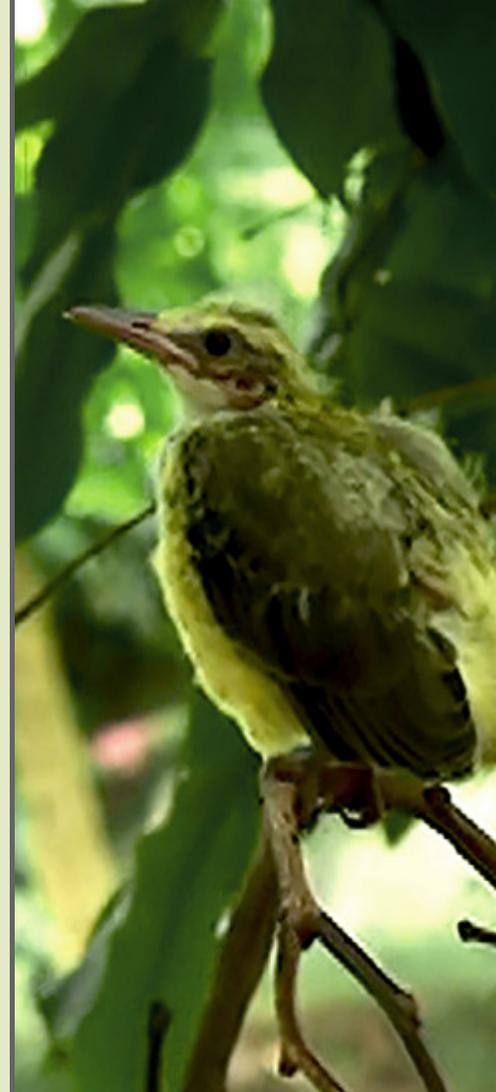
My thoughts raced back a year. To that painful fall. Down I fell from a tree and snap went my arm bone! “Did you check if his arm is broken or...”

“Wings, you mean? No. In fact, nothing is broken. Anyway, today it was time for him to get out of

the nest. And he fell. But he will learn to fly. You should know chicks learn to flap their wings much before they are ready to leave their nest. And so they do not fall hard.”

“But still... why should your nest be so high up if your chicks are in the habit of falling off? Don't you think you should build it lower down. Much lower?”

The nest was on a very tall tree. Thrice as tall as





the one I had fallen from.

Mother Oriole laughed out heartily. "Well... we are birds of tall trees. Almost never seen on the ground. We like fruits, berries and nectar. Available in plenty in the tall trees we frequent. We build our nests where we are comfortable and safe. In trees that are tall like this! Do you know some of us come all the way from Southern India, to the North, to nest. The hot season is what we need for our chicks."

I turned to look at the nest once again. I noticed some movement on a branch above. I was surprised to see another bird, a plump green one. It was too high for me to see clearly but I thought it was sitting on a pad of twigs.

“Who’s that?” I asked.

“Oh! That’s Green Pigeon. She is also nesting.”  
Mother Oriole continued, “Let me show you something. Look at that tree. The one next to



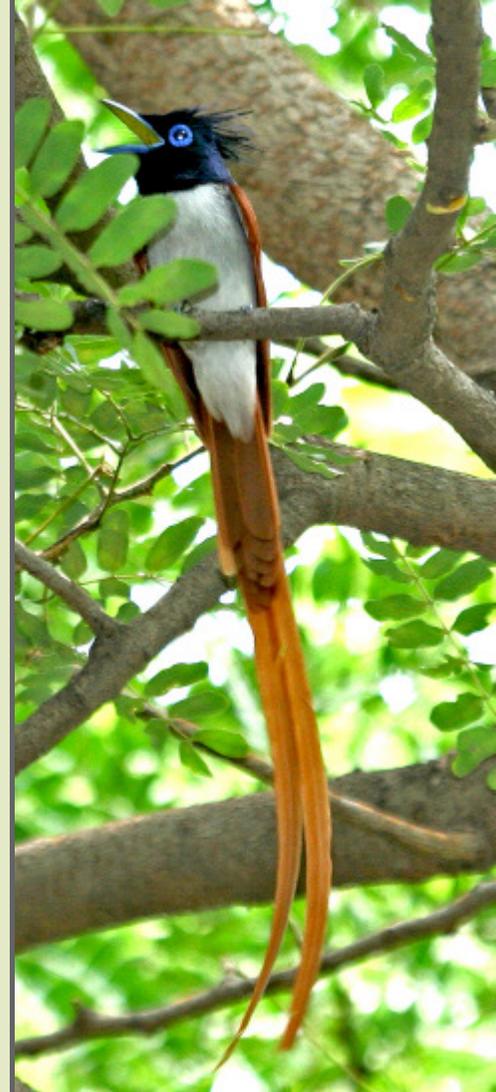


ours. A Goolar Fig tree. Look carefully. Look at the lowermost branch. Can you see a pendent nest? That belongs to the Purple Sunbird. To the right, do you see a horizontal branch? In the fork, do you see a big cup nest? Why, you can see chicks in it too! That's the Drongo's nest and those are Drongo chicks. A bit higher, on the next branch, do you see another cup nest? It is smaller and made of fine sticks. That's the Bulbul's nest. Move further to the next tree. It is a Siris tree again. Can you see a small cup nest

at the far end? A real small one? That belongs to the White Eye. Can you also see a small brown bird with a very long tail? That is Father Paradise Flycatcher and the small..."

"Stop... Stop!" What's going on? So many birds and so many nests? I don't even know where to look. I am getting dizzy! Before you show me any more..."

Father Oriole cut me short. "All she's trying to





say is that we birds like to build our nests near the Drongo's."

"But why?"

"Simple. Drongos are very watchful birds. They fiercely protect their territory. They do not hesitate to attack and chase away birds that may harm their eggs or chicks. They allow only some birds to nest near them. For instance, you will not find a Crow's nest on their tree."

**“Crow?” I recalled the chase.**

**“What has the Crow to do with all this? Why!  
You were chasing one too!”**

**“Well, if you must know,” sighed Mother Oriole  
sadly, “some birds are fond of fruits and berries,  
some like nectar, some seeds. Most birds,  
including us, eat insects. Food habits are so  
different you know and some birds just love  
eggs, chicks, small birds or...”**





**“Wait! I get it! The Crow...” A sudden realisation dawned upon me and everything fell in place. That Crow was after their chick!**

**Drongos provide these birds with some security. But they can't count on them always. They have to do their bit, like the fine chase I saw earlier.**

**\*\*\***

**Meet the characters**





Mother Golden Oriole



Father Golden Oriole



Firstborn



Green Pigeon



White Eye



Redvented Bulbuls



Father Purple Sunbird



Mother Purple Sunbird



Mother Paradise Flycatcher



Father Paradise Flycatcher



Black Drongo



And finally, the House Crow



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