

CHENNAI

Monsoon work steers clear of palm tree with baya weaver nests

Prince Frederick

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A section of Karanai Main Road, best described as the outer confines of the Ottiyambakkam panchayat, strikingly illustrates an elaborate rainwater management exercise by the Water Resources Department. A stormwater canal veering off the road sports sluice gates. Within sniffing distance, a small lake is parked, and a rainwater channel heading out of a culvert

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deadlines. In the central parts of Chennai, jobs on stormwater drain construction duty have prised out utility cables. Against this backdrop stands a palm tree bearing fastidiously built nests of male baya weavers, having survived the “clean-up”.

The NE Monsoon is still a whiff away from the check-in counter, but a sense of living in the midst of a monsoon is persistent, thanks to intermittent showers from the lingering effect of the secondary SW monsoon. The baya weavers are not missing out on the opportunity: These birds synchronise their breeding cycles with the monsoons. The male baya weavers seem to be plugging away at it, as evidenced by the nests in ‘helmet’ stage dangling from the fronds of this tree. There are also fully-constructed nests, a vignette of past workmanship.





A palm tree with baya weaver nests on a spruced-up landscape nearby. | Photo Credit: Prince Frederick

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themselves over the multitude of nest-building, as they instinctively expect rejections.

Males approaching an age when familial responsibilities are round the corner may go into a frenzy of experimental nest-building – the birding equivalent of net practice in cricket – building upon old abandoned nests, or weaving a new one among bulrushes. Besides, the location of the tree where the nest hangs also figures significantly in the match-making process. Palm trees are one of their popular choices, and the selection of this palm tree suggests copy-book technique, as it overlooks a body of water.

However, with the vegetation nearby having been cleared away, baya weaver males may be expected to put in more flaps of the wings to gather nesting material, usually grass twigs.

Assuming this tree registers a drop in activity pertaining to the design of new nests, with the old nests intact, it certainly should serve as a “practice net” for male baya weavers on the cusp of breeding responsibilities.