

## Aggressive Display in Two Species of Chowchillas (Logrunners)

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While participating in a faunal survey of Australian rainforest, observations were made on the aggressive display of the Northern Chowchilla *Orthonyx spaldingii* and Spine-tailed Chowchilla *O. temminckii*. In both instances the behaviour was exhibited by the male towards the author in response to capture of his mate.

On 5 November 1975 observations were made on *O. spaldingii* at Thornton Peak, near Daintree, Queensland. While checking mist nets, which had been erected to trap birds for recognition marking, I flushed two pairs of birds from the ground and into the net. Only one (a female) was captured, the other three bouncing out and escaped into the vegetation. Upon removal the trapped bird emitted several loud and vigorous cries, whereupon a male returned from the underbrush and, crouching with wings spread and tail drooping, ran calling towards me. I was standing on the opposite side of the net to him and, as he approached, he struck the net and bounced out. He passed under the net and repeated this behaviour from that side, again hitting the net and escaping. He made seven passes, either striking the net and escaping, or running under the bottom shelf. Each time the female called the male would attack with increased vigour, only turning away at the last moment. The closest approach was to within one metre. On the seventh pass he struck the net and I was able to capture him by looping the bottom of the net over him.

When I moved to another net I flushed a second pair. Both birds were caught; however, the male escaped during removal from the net. Calling by the female produced a similar, but less aggressive, response from him.

The birds were returned to a central point, where they were measured, marked and photographed prior to being released at their point of capture. During this time, calling by the first female elicited considerable struggling by her mate, but no reaction was noted when the other female called.

While performing a similar check of nets on 27 January 1976, in the Tooloom Scrub Floral Reserve in Beauray State Forest, New South Wales, I came upon a pair of *O. temminckii*. The female flew into the net and was caught, but the

male went in a different direction. Cries from the female resulted in a similar, but much more timid, display from the male. After one pass, he flew a short distance away and watched for about 10 seconds before moving out of sight. Both birds continued to call to one another, but the male could not be enticed into the net. Following marking and measuring, the female was returned to the point of capture.

Mr D. Milledge (pers. comm.) observed the same display when he captured the female of a pair while banding at Snow's Creek, near Lismore, New South Wales, on 30 August 1976.

A similar display for *O. temminckii* was described by Hindwood (1934), but in this instance it appeared that it was part of courtship behaviour.

Chowchillas are known to be aggressive birds. Beruldsen (1974) reported that a male *O. temminckii* attacked a tape-recorder hanging from his shoulder when he played the species call within the bird's territory. He did not mention a display corresponding to that of my observations.

My observations suggest that a very strong pair bond is formed in both species. It would be interesting to compare the response of the female to the capture of the male with the behaviour reported above.

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### References

- Beruldsen, G. R. (1974). 'Notes on the breeding behaviour of the Southern Chowchilla', *Sunbird* 5: 22-24.  
 Hindwood, K. A. (1934). 'The Spine-tailed Logrunner', *Emu* 33: 257-267.

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