LBC AUGUST TRIP TO MURTALA MOHAMED BOTANICAL GARDEN
by Bunmi Jegede

It was Lekki Bird Club’s (LBC) third birding trip and the second to the Murtala Mohammed Botanical Garden, Lagos-Epe Expressway. Although turnout was low, its lustre end made up for it. With just 4 people turning up by 7am at the take-off point coupled with the drizzling rain, it was just natural to predict an uninspiring birding expenditure. However, it did not end that way!

En route Murtala Mohammed Botanical Garden, we picked up a colleague, increasing the number of participants to 5. On arrival at the venue, we met 2 enthusiasts who arrived at the venue before the group. Birding started at 7:50am with informal transect walk along the garden driveway; identifying birds by sights and sounds. Species recorded include Swamp Palm Bulbul (*Thescelocichla leucopleura*), Olive-green Camaroptera (*Camaroptera chloronota*), Didric cuckoo (*Chrysococcyx caprius*) and Little Greenbul (*Andropadus virens*).

Out of the woods came the calls of Blue-headed Wood Dove (*Turtur brehmeri*) and Green Hylia (*Hylia prasina*) before the rapid and dashing flights of a pair of Nectariniidae interrupted. We later identified them as Collared Sunbirds (*Hedydipna collaris*) based on the shiny green plumage around the head and yellow under-parts. We also recorded African Pied Hornbill (*Tockus fasciatus*), Grey-crowned Negrofinch (*Nigrita canicapillus*), Yellow-rumped Tinkerbird (*Pogoniulus bilineatus*), Klaas’s Cuckoo (*Chrysococcyx klaas*) and the Moustached Warbler (*Melocichla mentalis*). Others are the Vieillot’s Black Weaver (*Ploceus nigerrimus*), Plain-backed Pipit (*Anthus leucophrys*), Senegal Coucal (*Centropus senegalensis*), Common Wattle-eye (*Platysteira cyanea*) and the Little Bee-eater (*Merops pusillus*), our focal species of the day!

The first pair of Little Bee-eaters appeared on a shrub, calmly perched and sallying for prey before returning back to the same shrub. In no time, we spotted another pair, which obliged photographs from the birding team. Several shots from different angles expectedly flushed the pairs leaving LBC members gaze in amazement as they fly away. We planned to watch Little Bee-eater sallying which we did experience. Indeed the trip was a huge success. The exercise was rounded off at about 9:15 am. Next bird trip is scheduled for 20th September, 2009; venue will be announced shortly. Plan to make September trip a date!