This is a Ant

This Ant like dry places for their nests which are a series of chambers and a maze of tunnels.
In October 2002 three Gambian schools, Bakalarr Basic Cycle School, Jarreng Basic Cycle School and Sinchu Baliya Lower Basic School, were each given an RMS approved school microscope. With no electricity, a small tilting mirror was provided to enable sunlight to illuminate the samples. All these schools are heavily oversubscribed – the largest, Sinchu Baliya, has 3,250 pupils, with classes of between 45 and 60 children. Ten further microscopes were sponsored by the RMS in February 2003 and distributed to a selection of schools, Sinchu Baliya receiving a further three because of the number of children at the school.

Sinchu Baliya’s Science Club in The Gambia
In order to ensure that the children were encouraged to use the microscopes themselves, competitions have been run regularly for microscopical drawings. Members of the EMUS SEM user group sponsor prizes for the best drawings of things seen under the microscopes at each of these schools, judged by Pippa Howard and other RMS Fellows.

**February 2004**

At Sinchu Bailya, children from Grades 5 and 6 of the increasingly popular Science Club had drawn up to three items each and the teachers had selected the ten best entries from each grade. The overall standard was very high, particularly when one considers that these children had never looked through a microscope before. The Science Club meetings were held in a rather dark, overcrowded classroom – not ideal, to say the least – so it was decided that a proper Resource Centre would be a good idea. (The construction of the Pageant-funded Resource Centre at Sinchu Bailya continued throughout 2004 and early 2005. The aim was to provide a purpose-built Science library and home for the Science Club, which could be used by groups of children and staff both during and outside school hours.)

**October 2004**

The visit to Sinchu Bailya began with a presentation by the now flourishing Science Club. Several individual children gave us short, spoken passages on each of the five senses and then a group sang us a delightful song on the same subject. We presented prizes and certificates for the 'Fascinated by Birds' competition that had been run in co-operation with Schools Across the World (SAW) earlier in the year. None of the Gambian children who entered had won the SAW prizes, but we thought that their standard was worthy of Pageant awards. As well as the children’s individual prizes we presented a pair of binoculars to Omar Janneh, the Science Club Co-ordinator, for use by the whole club. These were to be called the 'Malick Barry' binoculars in recognition of the exceptional entry by the winner of the younger age group (12 and under; see opposite).

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**Drawing of an ant as seen through a microscope, by Adama Sallah (Grade 4 at time of drawing), Sinchu Bailya Science Club**
**February 2005**

Prizes were presented to the Science Club at Sinchu Baliya Lower Basic School for the latest microscopical drawing competition. Sinchu Baliya has one of the most thriving Science Clubs of any of the schools that Pageant visit and it is always a joy to see their work and enthusiasm, for which much credit must go to their Science Co-ordinator, Omar Janneh. Certificates and prizes (illustrated Science and Maths Dictionaries) were presented to the winners in Grades 4, 5 and 6 together with a wonderful array of posters and a selection of experiments in kit form for the whole Science Department.

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**Question:** What interests you most about the things birds do? Can you learn anything from the way they act?

**Answer:** The thing that interests me most about birds is the manner of their eating. Before they eat a sound or cry is usually made to call all the rest of the birds, who may be elsewhere, to come and join in the session. This shows unity and brotherhood among themselves. Also, during the eating session they eat steadily without hassle. They politely peck the grains one after the other. Also, what is most interesting is that they always reserve some food in their mouth for the young ones who cannot join in the session, maybe because they cannot fly or are not in good health. From this I learnt that these birds love their young ones very much and they care for each other. These birds were weaver birds.
**November 2005**

Pageant visited Sinchu Baliya Lower Basic School and we were shown round the newly decorated and furnished Resource Centre – Omar Janneh, the Science Co-ordinator of the school, had undertaken the work with his Scout troop during the summer holidays and the new building looked splendid. We were really pleased with the Resource Centre – the only things that were needed were shelves to take the many books that have been donated to the school, at present stacked in piles on the floor around the walls of the room. These have now been provided and the Resource Centre is used by a continuous stream of children, even in break time. More children’s drawings were presented for judging – prizes to be awarded on the next visit.

**Drawing of a mosquito as seen through a microscope, by Yaya Colley (Grade 4 at time of drawing), Sinchu Baliya Science Club**

**Drawing of an ant as seen through a microscope, by Muhammed Saidy (Grade 6 at time of drawing), Sinchu Baliya Science Club**
PAGEANT stands for Projects Aiding Gambian Education And Natural Talent. It was established as a UK Charity in 2002 specifically to support education and related projects in The Gambia.

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