

NOTEBOOK

Unusual roosting behaviour of Coppersmith Barbet *Megalaima haemacephala* in Matale district, Sri Lanka

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The Coppersmith Barbet *Megalaima haemacephala* is easily identifiable and is widely distributed throughout South and South-East Asia. It is the only open country barbet in the region and has benefited from human activity as areas have been cleared. All aspects of its life, including feeding, nesting and roosting, revolve around its association with trees. On 3 October 2006 the authors observed a Coppersmith Barbet going to roost in a man-made electricity pillar. Barbets generally nest and roost in holes excavated by the birds themselves in trees or other wooden artefacts (del Hoyo *et al.* 2002), and searches of the literature found no reference to barbets roosting in any other situations.

The observation was made in Kamarawa, Matale District in the Central province of Sri Lanka, approximately 2 m away from the Kamarawa minor road at 7°42'22.11"N 80°46'24.45"E. A mature male Coppersmith Barbet was initially observed at about 17h45 on the day in question, while it was flying from a tree to electric wires 15 m away. It flew several times between other large trees and the electric wires over a period of nearly

25 minutes, apparently inspecting its surroundings. The bird then flew to a concrete electricity pillar, about 6m in height, and perched inside a hole, approximately 8 cm wide and 15 cm high, near the top of the pillar. It remained in the hole and after nearly 45 minutes appeared to fall asleep, with its head outside the hole. We therefore assume this to have been its roosting place. The period of observation concluded at 19h15.

We asked some villagers who live near to the site about this bird. They informed us that the bird had been roosting there for approximately six months duration and we speculate whether it might also have used it as a nest site.

Acknowledgements

The authors wish to thank Asha De Vos for reviewing the manuscript, Deepal Warakagoda and Kelum Manamendra-Arachchi for their comments, and Naalin Perera, Chandana Asela, Sampath Goonatilaka, Mendis Wickramasinghe, Prasanna Samarawickrama, Sarath Ekanayake, Vimukthi Weeratunga and Chinthaka Kaluthota for their help in various ways.

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Plate 1. Coppersmith Barbet *Megalaima haemacephala* roosting inside hole in concrete electricity pillar (a) and in close-up (b), October 2006.

