

(II)

COURTSHIP FEEDING BY THE MALABAR BARBET *MEGALAIMA MALABARICA* FEMALE NEAR NEST

The Malabar Barbet *Megalaima malabarica* is an endemic species of the western ghats, India occurring in the evergreen hill forests (Rasmussen and Anderton 2005). It is a frugivorous species that breeds from December to May. The Breeding biology of barbets *Megalaima viridis* and *M. malabarica* was studied in Periyar tiger reserve, Kerala, S. India (Yahay, 1988).

On 23 February 2007, at 10.45am we observed a nest of Malabar Barbet near the forest information centre at the boat landing at Periyar Tiger Reserve, Thekkady. The nest hole was a cavity in the stub of a medium sized broken branch of a large tree, *Delonix regia*, about 4m high from the ground. The parent bird was feeding the young in the nest, spending time, brooding there, flying out with fecal sacs at regular intervals and returning with small dark-coloured fruits in their beaks.

At one point, both birds were away from the nest.

One was observed perching on a branch close to the nest with a fruit in its beak. Another bird, presumably the male, flew in, alighted atop the perching bird and copulated. The first individual presented the fruit to the one on the top, at the end of the copulation sequence. The second bird took the fruit and swallowed it. Ravi (1966) found male *M. haemocephala* feeding female during copulation. Yahay (1988) reported that both the *Megalaima viridis* and *M. malabarica* which raised second broods were seen to copulate 5-7 days prior to the fledging of the brood. He has also observed the male *M. viridis* feeding its mate just before or just after the copulation. However he didn't observe courtship feeding in *M. malabarica* or females feeding males during copulation in any of the two species. Hence our observation is the first to document food exchange between mated *M. malabarica* and the first of females providing food items to males during copulation sequences.

References

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