

UNUSUAL NESTING SITE OF COPPERSMITH BARBET *MEGALAIMA* *HAEMACEPHALA* (MÜLLER) IN RESIDENTIAL AREA OF LUDHIANA CITY

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web supplement

On 15 August 2003 I sighted from the I floor of my house, a bird slightly dumpier than a house sparrow perching on an electric wire over a busy street at 1800hr in the Model Town area of Ludhiana city. After a minute or two, it flew to perch on cable TV wires supported by bamboo poles about 14-15ft in height on the other side of the lane. The bird was only 10ft away from my position. The characters like crimson breast and forehead, yellow throat and green streaked under parts were very distinctive of Crimson-breasted Barbet or Coppersmith Barbet *Megalaima haemacephala* (Müller). During the observation period of 10min, the bird perched on three different sites on cable TV wires, before flying away.

Similarly on 16 August, I noticed the bird at around 1805hr perching on a point near the same bamboo poles. It made very deep, quite low monotonous calls, which were repeated after every 6 to 8sec. After 10min, the bird perched on the tip of the bamboo pole and soon after entered into the hollow of the bamboo pole, raising its head out after 2min. It looked around moving its head for 2min and then lowered it into the pole, it did not come out for the next 10min.

I observed the Barbet residing in the bamboo pole (Image 1^w) regularly from 16 August to 20 November both in the mornings and evenings either from the I floor or standing in the verandah of the house. There was variation in the nest leaving time in the mornings and nest returning time in the evenings with change in day length.

The barbet was observed changing its nest leaving time from 0600hr to 0630hr during this period and the time shift in the nest returning time was from 1820hr to 1730hr. Although there are two municipal parks about 150 feet away from the bamboo pole nesting site, it was surprising to note that the bird continued to occupy its rather unusual nest undeterred by the regular fireworks display by the children on the street in the evenings from Dusshera festival (2 October) up to Diwali (25 October).

According to Ali (1996), "The Crimson-breasted Barbet built its nest in hole excavated in a snag of a dead softwood branch such as of the Coral or Drumstick trees, at moderate heights; when in a horizontal branch, the entrance hole is on underside".

Jose and Zacharias (2003) mentioned Coppersmith Barbets inhabiting four different habitat types namely urban, scrub jungle, woodland and secondary jungle in the Calicut University Campus, Kerala. The observations taken on the breeding of the Northern Green Barbet *M. zeylanica* at the Punjab Agricultural University at Ludhiana revealed that it nested in the Dek tree *Melia azaderach* hole and raised its first and second brood in the months of April and June (Kler, 2003). Coppersmith Barbet have been found common in occurrence and as resident breeders in all types of forest patches within the Kawal Wildlife Sanctuary, Andhra Pradesh (Srinivasulu, 2004). Jayson and Mathew (2002) had cited White-cheeked Barbet *M. viridis* among the seven species recorded throughout the year at the Mukkali in the Western Ghats of southern India. These studies did not point to any unusual nesting behaviour of either Coppersmith or any other barbet species. Hence this observation was considered worthy of reporting.

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^w see Image 1 in the web supplement at www.zoosprint.org



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