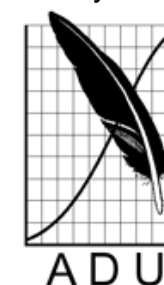


Ornithological Observations



An electronic journal published by BirdLife South Africa and the Animal Demography Unit at the University of Cape Town



Ornithological Observations accepts papers containing faunistic information about birds. This includes descriptions of distribution, behaviour, breeding, foraging, food, movement, measurements, habitat and plumage. It will also consider for publication a variety of other interesting or relevant ornithological material: reports of projects and conferences, annotated checklists for a site or region, specialist bibliographies, and any other interesting or relevant material.

Editor: Arnold van der Westhuizen

NEST CONSTRUCTION BY BARRED WREN WARBLER IN CENTRAL NAMIBIA

Jock Orford, Rosemary Orford; Melle PJ Orford and Peter Cunningham

Recommended citation format:

Orford J, Orford R, Orford MPJ, Cunningham P 2013. Nest construction by Barred Wren Warbler in Central Namibia. *Ornithological Observations*, Vol 4: 151-153

URL: <http://oo.adu.org.za/content.php?id=103>

Published online: 21 December 2013

- ISSN 2219-0341 -



NEST CONSTRUCTION BY BARRED WREN WARBLER IN CENTRAL NAMIBIA

Jock Orford¹, Rosemary Orford¹; Melle PJ Orford²
and Peter Cunningham^{3*}

¹P. O. Box 895, Windhoek, Namibia

²P. O. Box 5228, Windhoek, Namibia

³Environment and Wildlife Consulting Namibia,
P. O. Box 90717, Windhoek, Namibia

* Corresponding author: pckkwrc@yahoo.co.uk

Barred Wren Warbler *Calomonastes fasciolatus* are known secretive breeders tailoring elaborate nests from leaves of a variety of plant species ranging from forbs to broad bladed grasses to shrubs and trees throughout their range (Steyn 1996, Tarboton 2001, Hockey et al. 2005).

During late February 2013 a nest, of the Barred Wren Warbler was observed constructed in a juvenile Namib Coral-tree *Erythrina decora*, which is endemic to central and central-north Namibia (Mannheimer and Curtis 2009), in a Windhoek garden. The bird was not actually seen, but nest dimensions and previous confirmed nesting records in the same garden support Barred Wren Warbler although a similar nest builder, Grey-backed Camaroptera, also occurs in the area

On 1 April 2013 the nest was more closely investigated as it was observed to be deserted. The nest was located at a height of 1.2 m, and construction using 3 leaves, expertly sewn – even tucked together at the corners in places. It was suspended by being "pop riveted" to neighbouring green leaves.



Fig 1 - Barred Wren Warbler nest, using 3 leaves, in a Namib Coral-tree *Erythrina decora* in central Namibia.

The inner nesting material was "pop riveted" to the outer leaves in numerous places (Figures 1 and 2). The 3 leaves forming the outer protective layer of the nest were either nipped off at the petiole (leaf stalk) or became detached during construction. Either way; the leaves were not joined to the living tree anymore, resulting in a suspended nest structure. Namib Coral-tree leaves are trifoliate, spirally arranged and 140-190 mm in length, probably indicating the convenience of the 3 leaves used during the nest construction. Large green leaves measured *in situ* were 17 cm x 13 cm (hwx). The dry nest dimensions were 11,5 cm x 9 cm x 7 cm (hxwxd) with the opening being located on top to one side, measuring 4 cm x 2 cm (hxw).



Fig 2 - The elaborate tailoring and "pop riveting" clearly visible.

The entire nest lining consisted of fine white silky plant down, similar to the down associated with the seeds of the near-endemic Elephant vine *Strophanthus amboensis* found in central Namibia. Seeding of this plant coincides with the general nesting period of the Barred Wren Warbler – i.e. September to April. Hairs associated with the seeds of Milkweed *Gomphocarpus fruticosus* could possibly be used in the nesting material as well. Both plants are from the Apocynaceae family (Mannheimer and Curtis 2009).

Previous confirmed nests of Barred Wren Warbler, in the same garden, were made in Knobbly Creeper *Combretum mossambicense* and the alien Kumquat *Citrus japonica* at heights of 0.5 m and 1.2 m respectively. Two of the nests were higher – albeit slightly – than the 1 m suggested by Tarboton (2001) although within the range – 1-3 m

and up to 4 m – as suggested by other authors (Roberts 1928, Steyn 1996). The number of leaves used is fewer – usually 10 to 15 – than suggested by Tarboton (2001), but probably due to the larger size of Namib Coral-tree leaves. Nest dimensions are also slightly larger than that presented by Tarboton (2001), but probably also due to the measurements of the leaves used.

The nesting period falls within the range – November to March (Tarboton 2001) – although slightly later than – December to January – as suggested for Namibia (Maclean 1985). The distinctive nest entrance hole, usually used to confirm Barred Wren Warbler, was however missing as the nest was observed to be unused, and thus incomplete.

This sighting adds to the knowledge of Barred Wren Warbler nest construction and site selection from central Namibia.

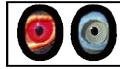
- oo0oo -

REFERENCES

Hockey PAR, Dean WRJ, Ryan PG 2005. Roberts - Birds of Southern Africa, VIIth ed. The Trustees of the John Voelcker Bird Book Fund, Cape Town, RSA.

Maclean GL 1985. Roberts' birds of southern Africa. John Voelcker Bird Book Fund, Cape Town, RSA.

Mannheimer CA, Curtis BA 2009. Le Roux and Müller's field guide to the trees and shrubs of Namibia. Macmillan Education Namibia, Windhoek, Namibia.



Tarboton W 2001. A guide to the nests and eggs of southern African Birds. Struik Publishers, Cape Town, RSA.

Roberts A 1928. Birds and mammals from South West Africa. Annuals of the Transvaal Museum 12: 289-329.

Steyn P 1996. Nesting Birds: The breeding habits of southern African birds. Fernwood Press, Vlaeberg, RSA.