

Nesting Record of Black-and-Orange Flycatcher *Ficedula nigrorufa* in Nilgiris, Tamil Nadu, India

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The Black-and-Orange Flycatcher *Ficedula nigrorufa* is a species of flycatcher endemic to the central and southern areas of the Western Ghats, the Nilgiris, and Palni hill range in southern India. The main population of this bird is found in the high elevation plateaus (above 1,500 m asl) areas of the Nilgiris, Palani Hills, Biligirirangans (Bellaji and Honnametti), and Kannan Devan Hills. They prefer areas with high leaf litter and undergrowth in open shola grassland habitats (Khan 1978). It is a highly parochial bird and no local movements other than dispersal of young has been noted (Khan 1978). To the north, it occurs in the Kudremukh National Park and the Bababudan Hills and south to the Ashambu Hills (Praveen & Kuriakose 2006). Some old records of the species from Maharashtra and Sri Lanka (Layard 1873) have been considered dubious (Ali & Ripley 1996; Khan 1978). This short note represents the nesting behavior and nestling of the Black-and-Orange Flycatcher in Nilgiris, Tamil Nadu, India.

An active nest of the Black-and-Orange Flycatcher was observed on 12 May 2021 (76.706803N; 11.371419E, 2,260 m asl) near DFL area, Lovedale, the Nilgiris, Tamil Nadu, southern India (Fig. 1). The area is located in the Eucalyptus forest plantation near human habitation, where there are several human habitations with lots of human disturbances. The minimum and maximum temperatures in this district were 20°C and 26°C respectively, with annual precipitation of rainfall of 1,920.8 mm. Measurements of the nest for description were collected with a metal caliper to the nearest 0.1 mm and the main measurements were taken with a measuring tape.

The nest containing two nestlings in their

initial stage of the development was over *Ulex europaeus* bushes in the Eucalyptus forest plantation near human habitation (Fig. 1). The nest had a very remarkable structure for a Flycatcher, a large and regular ball of dry sedge and coarse grass, with a small entrance hole at one side near the top. It is entirely devoid of lining but is placed on a foundation of dead leaves. The nest had the following dimensions: total outside height 18 cm; widest outside diameter 36.5 mm; the inside height of nesting chamber 13cm; inside diameter of nesting chamber 19cm; diameter of nest entrance 14cm; circular chamber entrance 5.5cm (horizontal length) per 6 cm (vertical length). The nestlings had closed eyes, the skin on their bodies was dark reddish, and on their heads, dark grey. Their bills were dark, the swallow flanges, and the interior of their mouth was bright yellow. During approximately one hour of nest observation, only one parent came to attend the nestlings. This parent brought whole arthropods to the nest, through its beak. After provisioning the nest, the adult brooded the nestlings while its tail projected to the outside, remaining covered by the projection of material over the chamber's entrance.

The observed nest was found in the May pre-monsoon season. However, our observation corroborated with the previous literature the breeding season of the Black-and-Orange Flycatcher from March to May, and a few eggs may still be found in June (Hugh Whistler 1949). Unfortunately, the nest was destroyed by firewood collectors on 17 May 2021. We kept the fallen nest into the nearest bushes and we monitored behavior of the parent birds. On the next day, 18 May 2021, heavy rain after the rain we went to the nest but unfortunately, the nest

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was destroyed and there were no chicks at the nest at that time and no parent bird movement was also observed.



Fig. 1. Nest and Nestling of Black and Orange Flycatcher in Nilgiris, Tamil Nadu, India

There are only a few pieces of kinds of literature are available for territorial behavior (Khan 1980), distribution (Khan 1978), and range extension (Praveen & Kuriakose 2006) of the Black-and-Orange Flycatcher. No work has been carried out on breeding and nesting of this species in the Western Ghats region so far. Hence the present observation is the first known information on nesting behavior and nestling of the Black-and-Orange Flycatcher in the Western Ghats. Although definitive conclusions cannot be drawn from one nest, the data presented here is useful to compare the characteristics of the nest of Black-and-Orange Flycatcher in further studies.

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