

## **Intrusion of a Coppersmith Barbet's Nest by a Plantain Squirrel**

Reported by Lee Tiah Khee and Lim Kim Chuah  
Photos by Lee Tiah Khee

Tiah Khee and I (but mostly TK) have been making observations on a Coppersmith Barbet's nest at the Botanical Gardens since 26 June. The hole was located on a dead snag about 20 m above ground.

At the time of discovery, the parents were already feeding the young. From our observation point, it looks like there was only one chick in the hole. Food brought in by the parents consisted mainly of berries, figs and other kind of fruits. But there was one occasion when one of the parents brought in what looked like a winged insect.

28 June: Just before last light, one of the parents was observed perched at the outside the hole preening itself before finally entering the nest, probably brooding the chick for the night.

10 July: The chick was still been fed and at more frequent intervals, indicating that the chick has grown bigger and probably close to fledging.

15 July: At 9:30 am, I received a SMS from TK indicating that feeding was still in progress. However shortly after, I received a call from an excited TK telling me that there was an intrusion by a Plantain Squirrel and that the chick has abandoned the nest. It seems that the squirrel has gnawed through the dead snag and left significant damage to the nesting hole. Probably fearful of its young life, the barbet chick flew off. One of the parents subsequently returned but obviously could not find anyone home. It started to call for the chick and left the hole after some moments.

We hope the parents did eventually find the chick. But mystery remain as to what was the squirrel doing at the hole. What food did it hope to find there? What was the purpose of gnawing a big hole in the dead snag? We can only wonder.



A panic and desperate barbet chick and the intruding Plantain Squirrel



*By Lee Tiah Khee*

The chick abandoned the nest after a while



*By Lee Tiah Khee*

A parent inspecting the abandoned nest.



*By Lee Tiah Khee*

A parent in distress