

OBSERVATIONS ON NESTING OF THE BROWN SWIFT *Apus niansae*¹
IN ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA

Although the Brown Swift *Apus niansae* is regularly seen in most of its range in Ethiopia, Somalia, Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania, its biology is not well known (Brooke 1971). In Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, it is locally abundant during the rainy seasons (February or March through April and June through September) but uncommon in the dry months of the year (EKU, pers.obs.; Guichard 1950; Pain et al. 1975, Smith 1944). During the rainy seasons it nests in colonies inside some of the larger, older buildings of the city. From 1965-1969 I observed a colony nesting in the Science Building at Arat Kilo campus of Haile Selassie I University (now called Addis Ababa University). Some of my observations are reported below.

Nesting site: This swift is known to nest in crevices of cliffs and gorges (van Someren 1922) and in air vents under house eaves (Schwab 1979). The colony reported in this paper was located in the attic of the Science Building, a 50 m long, 15 m wide, 2 storey concrete structure built in the late 1930s. The swifts nested on a concrete beam next to but inside the outer wall of the building, just below the junction of the outer wall and the roof and about 10 m above ground level immediately above the ceiling of the upper floor of the building. They entered the building through cracks and small holes in the outer wall at the level of the concrete beam.

General activity: During many but not all days during the rainy seasons, as many as 75 to 100 pairs of the Brown Swift circled over and often flew in and out of the Science Building. They were most active in the early morning from about sunrise at 0600 to 0900-1100 and one to two hours before sunset from about 1700-1900, usually circling above the Science Building sometimes at heights of up to 200-300 m. When the swifts started to show nesting activity (eg. adults chasing each other and apparently copulating near the Science Building, flying into and out of the building or flying into and remaining in it, young calling in the attic, young falling out of the building, and one count of nests with eggs and young), they remained active throughout the day, chasing each other and flying in and out of the eaves of the building.

During the rainy season this swift was seen in flocks in several other areas of Addis Ababa. After a major rain storm, especially in the late evening or early evening before sunset, it was not uncommon to see individual swifts circling high over the city. In the dry (non-breeding) months, swifts were rarely seen at all although very occasionally when I visited the Science Building after dark, I heard a few birds (probably less than 5) calling from the attic (8 nights during 5 years' observation).

Time of nesting: Addis Ababa has two rainy seasons, the small rains that fall any time between February and April and the big rains from June through September. From 1965 through 1969 the Brown Swift nested usually during the small rains, always during the big rains, but never during the dry months. Thus in 1965 nesting occurred in April and July through September, in 1966 February through April and June through August, in 1967 March through September (this year the small rains continued through May, merging with the big rains), in 1968 February through April and June through September, and in 1969 June through September. Although the small rains did occur in 1969, no nesting took place then.

¹ Called Nyanza Swift in *Birds of East Africa*.

Nesting attempts: Between 10-50 pairs attempted to nest at a time with number of nesting attempts varying annually from 4 in 1965, 6 in 1966, 9 in 1967, 7 in 1968, and 4 in 1969. The total number of pairs nesting varied annually from 150 in 1965, 60 in 1966, 195 in 1967, 150 in 1968, to 20 in 1969.

Nests: The nests were circular and consisted of numerous feathers glued together with pieces of straw 1-12 cm long. In one instance two pieces of loose concrete, each about 3 cm in diameter, were glued into the nest. Two nests measured 10 x 10 cm with the cavity 3 cm deep and 9 x 10 cm with the cavity 2.5 cm deep.

Eggs and clutch size: Four, elliptical, unspotted white to off-white eggs measured 22-26 x 13-15 (23.5 x 17.5 mm). Clutch size for 7 nests was 1.9 eggs/nest (3, 2, 2, 1, 1, 3, 1).

Nesting success: In May 1967 50 per cent (25 out of a total of 50 nests counted) had eggs or partly feathered young. In 1965, 1967 and 1968 48.3 per cent of the nests were estimated to have young calling in them (1965: 55 of 150; 1967: 100 of 195; 1968: 85 of 150).

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EXAMPLE OF APPARENT HYBRIDISATION BETWEEN *TERPSIPHONE RUFIVENTER* AND *TERPSIPHONE VIRIDIS*

The status of these two species in the area round Kampala is of some interest. Both species are common, and occur together in the same gardens in more than one place in Kampala. *T. rufiventer* is basically a forest species, and the race *somereni* occurs in southern Uganda in the true forests. The race *emini* tends to occur in more open areas, such as gardens and fragmented forest. This race has much paler rufous underparts than *somereni*. *T. viridis* occurs in southern Uganda in two forms: *restricta* which, as far as is known, is confined to the islands, and the adjacent shore of L Victoria. In the Kampala area the commonest form of *viridis* is *ferreti*. This is a paler grey below than *restricta*, and the tail is not so long. Occasional



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