

## A nest of Collared Apalis *Apalis ruwenzori* in Kahuzi-Biega National Park, Democratic Republic of Congo

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Un nid de l'Apalis du Ruwenzori *Apalis ruwenzori* au Parc National de Kahuzi-Biega, République Démocratique du Congo. En juillet 2005, pendant que nous conduisions un inventaire des oiseaux au Parc National de Kahuzi-Biega, nous avons trouvé un nid de l'Apalis du Ruwenzori *Apalis ruwenzori* avec deux oisillons. Nous donnons ici une description du nid et des oisillons, ainsi que des informations sur le comportement et le nombre de visites au nid des adultes.

Collared Apalis *Apalis ruwenzori* is a common understorey species endemic to highland forests of the Albertine Rift (Urban *et al.* 1997). Like many species of these diverse highlands, its breeding biology is poorly known. Only two nests have been described: from Nyungwe Forest, Rwanda (December), by Dowssett-Lemaire (1990), and from Bwindi Impenetrable Forest, Uganda (April), by Butynski (1993). These authors also cite birds in breeding condition in



**Figure 1.** Nest of Collared Apalis *Apalis ruwenzorii*, with adult peering from the entrance, Kahuzi-Biega National Park, DR Congo, 8 July 2005 (John Bates)

Nid de l'Apalis du Ruwenzori *Apalis ruwenzori*, avec un adulte apparaissant à l'entrée, Parc National de Kahuzi-Biega, RD Congo, 8 juillet 2005 (John Bates)

**Table 1.** Number of nest visits with food by a pair of Collared Apalis *Apalis ruwenzori* during a five-day period, at Kahuzi-Biega National Park, DR Congo, July 2006.

**Tableau 1.** Nombre de visites au nid par un couple d'Apalis du Ruwenzori *Apalis ruwenzori* au cours d'une période de cinq jours, Parc National de Kahuzi-Biega, RD Congo, juillet 2006.

	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Total
Start time of observation	09.25*	07.42	07.20	07.35	07.20	
End time of observation	14.58	13.37	13.31	12.57	14.47	
Total observation time (in hours and minutes)	5h33m	6h55m	6h11m	5h22m	7h27m	31h18m
Number of visits of adult bird	35	36	43	43	51	208

\*Time of first visit of adult bird; for all other days, start time of observation is time of observer's arrival.

Itombwe Forest, Democratic Republic of Congo (hereafter DR Congo), in March–May (based on Prigogine 1971) and adults feeding fledged young in Rwanda in October and December, with other breeding reports for April, September and December. Chapin (1953) mentions that three males collected in the Rwenzori Mountains were in breeding condition between mid-November and late December

On 8 July 2005, while conducting avian surveys in Kahuzi-Biega National Park, DR Congo, we found a nest of Collared Apalis containing two chicks, on flat terrain at 2,000 m altitude, in Afromontane forest bordering Chashoga swamp (02°13'26"S 28°46'19"E). The forest in this area has an irregular upper canopy, open mid-canopy and dense understorey. An adult was mist-netted near the nest, and an adult was subsequently photographed attending it (Fig. 1), confirming the identity of the occupants. The nest was constructed in a common understorey plant, *Alchornea hirtella* (Euphorbiaceae), the same bushy species in which both other documented nests were placed (Dowsett-Lemaire 1990, Butynski 1993), and was suspended with its base 1.35 m above ground. It comprised an elongated globe of mosses, c.13 cm across at its widest, with a circular entrance of 3.5 cm diameter and an inner lining of dried grass. The chicks were unfeathered with closed eyes, and were presumably not more than a few days old.

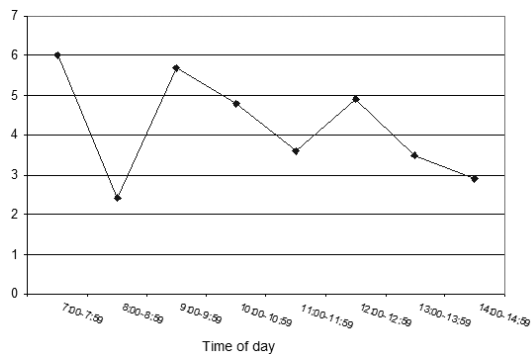
Using binoculars, we observed feeding activity at the nest by stationing ourselves quietly c.5 m away. Both adults were involved in caring for the young. One adult generally remained inside the nest whilst the other brought food. Food was either transferred to the bird in the nest or deposited at the nest entrance. During 31 hours and 18 minutes of observation over a five-day period, BM noted 208 nest visits occurring between 07:00 hrs

and early afternoon (Table 1). Visits occurred throughout the day, with peaks in the early morning, mid-morning and late afternoon (Fig. 2).

By the third day of observation, blackish feathers (c.1 cm long) had begun to appear on the pale yellow bodies of the chicks, especially on the head, neck, back and wings; the eyes were still closed.

On 10 July, a juvenile (weighing 12 g, similar to the adults) was captured at another site at the same elevation (2,000 m, 02°13'31"S 28°46'16"E) in similar habitat (primary forest with an irregular upper canopy, moderately dense midstorey and dense understorey, bordering a swamp). It was identified as a juvenile based on the buffy breast with no obvious breast-band. Whilst being handled, two adults approached scolding.

Chapin (1953) suspected that many Albertine Rift birds breed throughout the year. Data for Collared Apalis in the southern Albertine Rift



**Figure 2.** Nest visitation rate (visits/hour) of a pair of Collared Apalis *Apalis ruwenzori* feeding two chicks, Kahuzi-Biega National Park, DR Congo, July 2006.

Fréquence des visites au nid (nombre de visites par heure) d'un couple d'Apalis du Ruwenzori *Apalis ruwenzori* nourrissant deux oisillons, Parc National de Kahuzi-Biega, RD Congo, juillet 2006.

region (Rwanda and South Kivu, DR Congo) suggest breeding occurs at least in March, April, July, October and December. Additionally, our record from Kahuzi-Biega National Park confirms the presence of this Afrotropical Highland-biome species in this Important Bird Area, where it was thought likely to occur (Demey & Louette 2001).

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