

Tree Martins Occupying Fairy Martin Nests

On 31 December 1990 near Big Heath Conservation Park, South Australia, with Jack Bourne we visited a colony of Fairy Martin *Cecropis ariel* nests. The colony consisted of at least 12 typical Fairy Martin nests, retort-shaped structures built of mud pellets, placed on the underside of a concrete road-bridge in the angles between walls and roof. We noticed that the group of about 20 birds that persisted in flying close and noisily throughout about ten minutes we spent close to the nests in late morning were all Tree Martins *C. nigricans*, except for a single Fairy Martin. The identification was checked carefully at close ranges by all three observers. Several Tree Martins were seen to enter Fairy Martin nests and another was disturbed from one when it was touched.

The literature includes reports of Tree Martins nesting on artificial structures (Sharland 1943; Serventy & Whittell 1976; Bell 1979; Blakers et al. 1984; Turner & Rose 1989) and of their using Welcome Swallow *Hirundo neoxena* nests (Sharland 1943; Mellor 1967; Turner & Rose 1989), but we have found no reference to their using Fairy Martin nests.

References

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