# Short communications

## Red-billed Hornbill *Tockus erythrorhynchus* breeding in a hollow brickstone wall

Red-billed Hornbills *Tockus erythrorhynchus* usually choose natural cavities, woodpecker or barbet holes in trees, and even bee-hive logs as breeding sites (Williams 1978, Kemp 1995, 2001, Poonswad *et al.* 2013). Although some hornbill species, including the Red-billed, accept artificial nestboxes in trees (Diop & Tréca 1993, 1996, Kemp 2001), to our knowledge breeding in man-made buildings has not yet been reported for Red-billed Hornbills.

During a trip to southern Ethiopia on 13 May 2012 we found a nest of a Red-billed Hornbill in a large hollow brick of an unplastered wall of a small outbuilding in a hospital area in the town of Dida Hara, Oromia Regional State (4°48′39′′N, 38°19′33′′E). The entrance hole was situated at a height of about 80 cm on the outer side of the wall (Fig. 1a) and was sealed in the typical manner of hornbills, leaving a small slit of approximately 6 x 2.5 cm (Fig. 1b). Apparently, the nest was occupied with a breeding female of which we could see the bill tip when standing close to the wall. A feeding male approached several times with various food items, predominantly locusts (among them slant-faced grasshoppers Acridinae and bush-crickets Phaneropterinae; Fig. 1c, d). We could not find out if young had already hatched.

**Figure 1.** a) Nesting site of the Red-billed Hornbill *Tockus erythrorhynchus* in a hollow brick stone wall of the small building on the left, the fence on the right was used by the male for perching before approaching the nest; b) sealed entrance slit of the nest in a hollow brick stone, the female's bill tip can be seen; c) the male waiting to approach the nest, carrying a slant-faced grasshopper (Acridinae); d) the male clings to the wall while feeding the female (Photos: K. Gedeon; Dida Hara, Oromia Regional State, Ethiopia, 13 May 2012).

Since the ongoing deforestation of Ethiopian savanna habitats causes further loss of natural breeding cavities in trees, it appears likely that the plasticity of breeding behaviour and the tolerance of man could lead to a closer affiliation of Red-billed Hornbill breeding sites to human settlements just as observed on this occasion.

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