

The nest and eggs of Lineated Foliage-gleaner *Syndactyla subalaris*

As currently defined⁶, the genus *Syndactyla* contains six species of medium-sized to large furnariids that forage amongst foliage and branches in the midstorey of montane forests. Lineated Foliage-gleaner *S. subalaris* inhabits montane forests from Costa Rica to Peru, but despite its broad distribution there are no published descriptions of nesting biology apart from a few accounts of fledglings^{3,4}. Here I describe a nest with two eggs in north-west Ecuador, within the range of the nominate subspecies^{6,8}.

On 28 May 2011 I found a nest of *S. subalaris* at Santa Lucia Cloudforest Reserve (00°05'N 78°35'W), 80 km north-west of Quito, prov. Pichincha, Ecuador, at 1,850 m. At 08h00 I flushed an adult from a nest with two eggs. It flushed silently and disappeared, so I confirmed the identification by using a video camera to film its return 20 minutes later. At 12h00 I returned and carefully removed the nest from the cavity to measure it and the eggs. On replacing the nest and eggs, an adult returned within 15 minutes and resumed incubation. I was unable to follow the fate of the nest.

The nest was constructed in a natural cavity within a living tree, c.40 cm in diameter at breast height. The cavity entrance was 2 m above ground and was a vertically oriented slit 13 cm tall, with a maximum width of 4.5 cm. I was unable to determine the cavity's internal dimensions, but its bottom was even with the lower edge of the entrance and it extended at least 10 cm above the top of the entrance. It was c.10–12 cm in diameter. The nest comprised two distinct parts, the first a loosely packed platform of short, thick, unbranched twigs, 6–12 cm long and 0.5–1.0 cm in diameter. Overall, the platform was 15 cm tall, reaching 1–2 cm above the top of the cavity entrance with just enough room for an adult to enter and exit at the top (Fig. 1). A few sticks



Figure 1. Stylised drawing of a cross-section of the nest and nesting cavity of Lineated Foliage-gleaner *Syndactyla subalaris*, prov. Pichincha, Ecuador, 28 May 2011 (Harold F. Greeney)



Figure 2. Nest and eggs of Lineated Foliage-gleaner *Syndactyla subalaris* removed from the tree cavity in which it was built, prov. Pichincha, Ecuador, 28 May 2011 (Harold F. Greeney)

protruded from the entrance. Atop the platform was a well-built cup of soft, flexible fibres. A sparse layer of long, branched, red-brown fibres lay directly on the platform, partially interwoven into the sticks. Within was a tightly woven cup of coiled flexible black rootlets and fibres (Fig. 2). The cup spanned the diameter of the platform (c.9–11 cm), was 6–7 cm in diameter internally and 2–3 cm deep. The two eggs were immaculate white, but slightly stained. They measured 25.0 × 19.0 mm and 26.0 × 19.0 mm. Both appeared well developed and one was slightly pipped. I suspect they were no more than 48 hours from hatching.

The breeding biology of *Syndactyla* foliage-gleaners is virtually unknown, with the exception of a few described nests

and some ecological data for Buff-browed Foliage-gleaner *S. rufosuperciliata* in southern South America^{1,2,5,6}. Vaurie⁹ provided a brief description of a nest presumed to belong to Guttulated Foliage-gleaner *S. guttulata*, which generally matches the description given here as well as descriptions of the nests of *S. rufosuperciliata*. Apart from Buff-browed Foliage-gleaner, this appears to be the first complete description of a nest for the genus *Syndactyla*.

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