

First description of the nest of the ruddy treerunner (*Margarornis rubiginosus*)

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We discovered a nest of a Ruddy Treerunner *Margarornis rubiginosus* at Monteverde Cloud Forest Preserve, Puntarenas province, Costa Rica (1,530 m) on 25 April 2004. The nest of this species has not been described previously¹⁻³. It was sited at c.25 m in the crown of a tree adjacent to a suspension bridge along a regularly used trail within mature cloud forest. The nest was on the underside of a thick branch (diameter: 45 cm), which projected from the main trunk at an angle of 20° from vertical. The nest was an oval mass of moss, well camouflaged on an epiphyte-covered branch (Fig. 1), and was c.30 cm tall and 20 cm wide. The nest entrance, which oriented downwards from the bottom of the nest, had a diameter of c.10 cm, and the entrance tunnel appeared to narrow considerably within. The lip of the nest entrance appeared to be woven of brown and green plant fibres, whereas the remainder of the exterior was of shaggy moss.

Moss hung down around the entrance, making it difficult to view into the nest from any angle except directly below. The branch to which the nest was attached, and the nest's structure, protected the interior of the nest from rain. The nest was sited underneath a large, leafy bromeliad and may have been attached to the root structure of this epiphyte.

Nests of Neotropical ovenbirds (Furnariidae) are variable and often highly cryptic³. The nest of only one other species of *Margarornis* has been described; that of the Pearled Treerunner *M. squamiger*, which is a ball of moss with a side entrance, placed below a limb or rock². Hanging nests of moss may prove to be a common feature amongst the four species in this genus.

We observed one or two adults feeding nestlings. During two hours of observation, we witnessed 20 feeding visits, but only one adult was seen per visit, making it impossible to



Figure 1. Photograph and line tracing of the nest of a Ruddy Treerunner *Margarornis rubiginosus* at Monteverde Cloud Forest Preserve, Costa Rica. The globular nest was constructed of moss and plant fibres, and positioned on the underside of a thick branch high in the canopy. The adult delivered food to the nest from the entrance, which is oriented downwards from the bottom of the nest (Daniel J. Mennill).

determine whether one or more individuals attended the nest. During each visit, the adult approached the nest in a long flight from below, perched briefly on the lip and then moved up into the nest, where only the tail and rump were visible. We inferred that the interior comprised a passage leading from the entrance to a shelf where the nestlings perched. On exiting, the adult dropped down in a long flight away from the nest. The nestlings begged loudly during each visit, a series of rapidly repeated, high, thin notes (*seet*). From the degree of overlap in begging vocalisations, we believe there were at least two nestlings. The adult occasionally uttered a quiet, thin *seet* at or near the nest. Each visit lasted no more than 2 seconds. On two occasions, we observed the adult carrying prey, presumably an arthropod, the wings of which extended at least 1 cm either side of the bill. The adult visited in bouts, returning every 2–3 minutes during a feeding bout. The longest between-bout interval was 18 minutes.

Directly below the nest, the leaves in the understorey were covered with nestling faecal material. During the two hours of observation, we observed faecal material falling from the nest four times.

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References

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