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ROOSTING AND NEST-BUILDING BEHAVIOUR OF THE WHITE-NEST SWIFTLET (*Aerodramus fuciphagus*) (Thunberg) (Aves: Apodidae) IN FARMED COLONIES

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The edible-nest swiftlets of the genus *Aerodramus* is one of the most ecologically unique and complex colonial nesting birds; being able to navigate in total darkness aided by echolocation and using its own saliva to construct nest. Economically it is a valuable natural resource, much sought-after for its edible nests. The knowledge on nesting and breeding ecology of this species has so far been limited only to cave populations whilst studies focusing on house-farmed population are still lacking. We studied the roosting and nest building behaviour of the white-nest swiftlet in two separate house-farmed colonies of different age in Miri Division, Sarawak from June 2010 to Jan 2011 (Site-I) and February 2012 to October 2012 (Site-II). Two types of infra-red (IR) cameras were used, namely (i) fixed focal-lens IR to monitor large colony and (ii) Pan-Tilt-Zoom camera). The present paper revealed new discovery in which three basic activity sessions are described; first emergence hours (0600–0700), post-emergence hours (0700–1000) and returning hours (1800–1900). During the post-emergence hours, approximately half of the sampled colony was observed re-entering the swiftlet house to resume building. Ten ethogram categories were developed to describe the roosting behaviour of the white-nest swiftlets — proximity fluttering, random roosting flights, pair switching, parallel shifting, pinching, preening, defecating, resting, interaction and nest building. There is a disparity in sexual contribution in nest building. For the marked pair, one of the partners is twice more hardworking, and is observed to return more frequently during the post-emergence hours to build nest. We hypothesised that it is the male (i.e. Individual-A) that contributes more to nest building, reasons being (i) A is the one that pinched B and not the other way around, (ii) this is where you insert the energy needed to produce egg. (iii) A is more protective over its partner when their nest reaches full-size, a point of time where egg production and copulation is expected.