

THE BREEDING BIOLOGY OF THE WHITE-RUMPED SWIFTLET *Aerodramus spodiopygius spodiopygius* IN SAMOA

MICHAEL K. TARBURTON

School of Science and Technology, Pacific Adventist University, PMB, Boroko, Papua New Guinea.

Present address: 3 Freda Court, Blackburn South, Victoria 3130. Australia.

E-mail: tarburton_m@virginbroadband.com.au

Received: 2 August 2004

In the lava-tube caves of Samoa the White-rumped Swiftlet *Aerodramus s. spodiopygius* has a protracted breeding season, laying eggs every month of the year. It builds nests of vegetation and saliva that average 44.7x43.7x11.8 millimetres in size, 5.1 metres from the cave floor and 5.2 metres from their nearest neighbour. These nests took 19 days to three months to build and usually contained a single egg weighing 1.6 grams and 18.2x12.3 millimetres in size. The nests lasted an average of 9.4 months and were used to raise up to three broods. The eggs took 25 or 26 days to hatch and the nestlings fledged in 47–57 days. Nesting success was 72 per cent in the Tafatafa colony and 45 per cent in the Falemauga Small Cave colony. The 72 per cent success rate is the highest for any swiftlet studied to date. The 45 per cent rate was probably a result of a combination of low placement of some nests, infertility, predation by rats or disturbance by observers.