

### A Nest of *Eutoxeres aquila heterura* in Western Ecuador

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Between 7 and 18 January 1978, I periodically observed an occupied nest of the White-tipped Sick-bill (*Eutoxeres aquila heterura*) at the Centro Científico Rio Palenque, 47 km south of Santo Domingo de los Colorados, Pichincha Province, Ecuador. The nest (Fig. 1) was hidden under a section of a *Heliconia* leaf that had split off from the main body of the leaf. The leaf itself was 30 cm wide by 1 m long, and the section from which the nest was suspended was 10 cm from the tip of the leaf. This section was 4 cm wide and 15 cm long and hung from the center rib of the leaf. The bottom of the nest was about 60 cm above the bed of a small intermittent stream (Lodo Creek) in a small valley in closed-canopy wet forest at an elevation of 170 m.

The nest was a cup of fine plant tendrils, attached to the leaf with cobwebs; the leaf formed most of the wall of the cup at the point of attachment. Beneath the cup was a loose mass of small dead leaves bound together by a few tendrils, attached to the bottom of the cup but not to the leaf. The weight of the mass of leaves may have acted as a counterbalance to prevent excessive swaying of the nest. The outer diameter of the cup was 52 mm, and the walls of the cup varied from 4 to 10 mm in thickness. The rim was highest where attached to the leaf and lowest opposite the point of attachment. The cup was 40 mm deep at the point of attachment and 15 mm deep on the opposite side. During the period of observation the nest contained two white elliptical eggs, which measured  $16.8 \times 10.0$  and  $16.8 \times 10.4$  mm, respectively.

At night, the bird's head faced the leaf, and the tail hung over the lower side of the cup opposite the point of attachment (Fig. 1). Skutch (1964, Auk 81: 5) observed that this position is also assumed by the Long-tailed Hermit (*Phaethornis superciliosus*) and noted that this allowed the bird to defecate over the side of the nest without having to alter its position.

During the day, the bird flew silently off the nest only after I approached to within 2 m. It consistently flew to perches on vegetation about 1.5–2.5 m up, in an area 10–15 m down the stream bank and 3 m from the edge, on the same side of the stream as the nest, and looked toward the nest. Once, it flew to several locations 10–20 m from the nest and gathered plant tendrils, which it took back to the nest. Twice in a 30-min observation period, a Long-tailed Hermit flew in a tight circle within 15 cm of the *Eutoxeres* nest, whereupon one bird (presumably the sicklebill)

uttered a high-pitched chattering noise, and the hermit quickly flew away. In observations after dark, the bird stayed on the nest despite a light being shined upon it during the activity of photographing it.

Ruschi (1961, Boletim Do Museu De Biologia, Biologia No. 28: 3) described a nest of this subspecies found in 1958, with the locality given as "the farm of Dr. Alfredo Spinoza," in Santo Domingo de los Colorados, Ecuador. That nest was almost identical in size, materials, and construction to the one described here and was also built on a palm leaf near a stream. Lloyd Kiff (pers. comm., in prep.) describes a nest and eggs of *E. aquila* found in Costa Rica in 1979 that is also virtually identical to mine in materials and construction.

Ruschi (1979, Aves do Brasil) published a classification of hummingbird nests in which he separated the nest type of *Eutoxeres*, *Glaucis*, *Ramphodon*, and *Threnetes* from those of *Phaethornis* species, primar-



Fig. 1. Nest of *Eutoxeres aquila heterura* at night, showing the bird in the typical position on the nest.

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ily because the nests of the former genera are loosely constructed, whereas those of *Phaethornis* are closely and compactly built. In addition, *Phaethornis* nests generally have longer "tails" of material beneath the nest than species of *Eutoxeres*, *Glaucis*, and *Therinetes* (Kiff pers. comm.)

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