

THE NEST OF THE RUSTY-BELTED TAPACULO (*LIOSCELES THORACICUS*)¹

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The Rusty-belted Tapaculo (*Liosceles thoracicus*) is in a monotypic genus in the family Rhinocryptidae (Peters, Check-list of birds of the world. Vol. VII. Museum of Comparative Zoology, Cambridge, MA, 1951) and is restricted to the Amazonian rain forest of southeastern Colombia, eastern Ecuador, eastern Peru, and western Brazil (Meyer de Schauensee, The species of birds of South America and their distribution, Livingston Publishing Company, Narberth, PA, 1966). Its nest, apparently, has never been described.

On 5 July 1984 I found a nest of *L. thoracicus* at Quebrada Oran in northeastern Peru, approximately 5 km N of the Amazon River, 85 km NE of Iquitos, Dpto. Loreto, elevation 110 m. I was attracted to the nesting site by a constant "peeping" sound reminiscent of the calls of a frog. Attempting to find the source, I removed some leaf litter from the forest floor and uncovered the entrance to the nest. It contained two young (LSUMZ 119936, ♂, testis 1.5 × 1.0 mm, and ♀, ovary 3.5 × 2.0 mm). The young were apparently near fledging stage; and although small and lacking tails, they were identically plumaged to an adult but lacked the yellow wash across the breast. The nest was set into the ground within the root system of a small tree in "terra firme" (never flooded) forest about 30 to 50 m from a small stream. The nest (LSUMZ Egg and Nest collection 903) was a round mass about 25 × 20 × 10 cm in size consisting of small twigs, grasses, lichens, mosses, small leaves, and clumps of earth. The lining consisted mostly of soft grasses. The entrance, located at the top of the spherical nest, was simply a hole that opened directly to the outside, not into an earthen tunnel as is typical of some other tapaculo nests (Johnson, The birds of Chile and adjacent regions of Argentina, Bolivia, and Peru. Vol. 2. Platt Establecimientos Gráficos S.A., Buenos Aires, Argentina, 1965). The entrance hole was partially hidden by leaf litter. The calls of the young resembled the introductory notes of the adult song but were higher pitched

and repeated many times. The adult song is a far-carrying, accelerating series of 10 to 15 low whistled notes that descend in pitch toward the end, typically lasting 5 to 6 seconds.

Rhinocryptids differ widely in site selection and nest structure. For example, in Chile *Pteroptochos megapodius* and *P. tarnii* excavate their own burrows with entrance tunnels as long as 2.4 m in length, ending in a spacious cavity, whereas *P. castaneus* has been known to build its nest in the interior of a dead trunk 3.9 m above the ground (Johnson 1965). *Scelorchilus albicollis* nests in burrows but is also known to use abandoned rodent holes (Johnson 1965). Using dry sticks and grass, *Eugralla paradoxa* builds a subspherical structure in trees (Johnson 1965).

Scytalopus magellanicus builds a domed nest consisting of root fibers, mosses, and lichens (Johnson 1965). A nest of this species, found by T. S. Schulenberg on 13 October 1980 in Dpto. Puno, Peru (5 km NNW Quiaca, 3,000 m), was excavated from just beneath the surface on a 30° slope covered with moss and leaf litter. The domed nest (LSUMZ Egg and Nest collection 907) consisted of moss and lichens with a few small twigs and some plant matter. A 10-cm tunnel (possibly natural) led from the nest entrance to the ground (T. S. Schulenberg, pers. comm.). Alexander Skutch described the nest of a congener, *S. unicolor*, which he found on 8 October 1939 in the Andes of Ecuador, as "a globular structure of richly branched, black, capillary material that fitted snugly into a niche in an earthen bank covered with selaginella and ferns" (Skutch, Studies of tropical American birds. Publ. Nuttall Ornithol. Club No. 10, Cambridge, MA, 1972:139). The small niche was thought to have been excavated by the adults.

The nest of *L. thoracicus* resembled that of *Scytalopus magellanicus* more than those of other rhinocryptid species mentioned. The *Liosceles* nest was similar in shape and general structure to the *S. magellanicus* nest found by Schulenberg but contained more twigs and grasses. Whether *L. thoracicus* excavates its own cavity or uses an existing hole at the base of a tree is unknown.

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