

# A Sight Record of the Magpie Tanager in Surinam

by Dale A. Zimmerman

*Cissopis leveriana*, the striking black-and-white Magpie Tanager, is a widespread South American species whose absence from the list of Surinam birds doubtless reflects limited field work in the interior forests of that country. Meyer de Schauensee (*A Guide to the Birds of South America*, Livingston Publ. Co., Wynnewood, Pa., 1970) records it from both Guyana and French Guiana as well as from Amazonian Brazil. However, neither Havereschmidt (*Birds of Surinam*, Oliver and Boyd, London, 1968) nor any of the several recent collectors and observers in Surinam have reported this unmistakable bird (J. P. Schulz, pers. comm.).

On Aug. 12, 1976, Marian Zimmerman, Allan Zimmerman and I clearly saw a single adult Magpie Tanager on Foengoe Island in the Raleigh Falls-Voltzberg Nature Reserve, about 50 km. upstream from Bitagron along the Coppename River in the Saramacca District. The bird was part of a loosely associated mixed species flock composed of woodcreepers (*Xiphorhynchus* sp., probably *X. guttatus*), Black-tailed Tityra (*Tityra cayana*), Gray-crowned Flycatcher (*Tolmomyias poliocephalus*), Palm Tanagers (*Thraupis palmarum*), Silver-beaked Tanagers (*Ramphocelus carbo*), and Turquoise Tanagers (*Tangara mexicana*), all of which were foraging in low trees along the island's small airstrip. We observed the Magpie Tanager three times during a 20-minute period, first at a distance of 25 meters and later as close as 15 meters. The sun was at the observers' backs.

Through 8x and 10x binoculars such details as the elongated, acute, somewhat lustrous black breast and neck feathers, the yellow irides and stout black bill were obvious. We had unobstructed views of the bird only slightly above eye level, at times against a background of blue sky but usually in front of foliage. It once perched atop a leafless branch, where we studied it for nearly two minutes as it preened. Our total observation time probably exceeded five minutes during which we each checked all details through a 10x binocular. Its plumage pattern was distinctive: the black feathers of throat and breast extended acuminately into the otherwise white underparts as far as the belly; those of the neck and upper back irregularly interdigitated with the white dorsal plumage. The long graduated tail was black with all of the rectrices prominently white tipped, as were the greater wing coverts. The inner secondaries were broadly edged with white. In flight the under wing coverts also appeared to be entirely white. The bird's length, about 25 cm., was readily apparent as it several times appeared in the same binocular field with Turquoise or Silver-beaked Tanagers. We recognized the Magpie Tanager immediately. I frequently had handled museum skins of this species and have seen the bird in life in southern Colombia during July 1975. All of us had examined a specimen shortly before our departure for Surinam. Under the circumstances I feel that there is no possibility of error in our identification.