

Notes on some little known or previously unrecorded birds of Suriname

Paul K. Donahue

DURING THE COURSE of four months of field work in Suriname between January 1979 and January 1982, observations were made of a number of bird species poorly known or previously unrecorded for the country. The species referred to here as "first records" for the country, all northern migrants, have actually already been listed in a recent checklist by Donahue and Pierson (1982); I here provide the information that supported their inclusion in that work.

BROAD-WINGED HAWK (*Buteo platypterus*) — An adult was observed on the Mazaroni Plateau in Brownsberg Nature Park, about 95 km south of Paramaribo, March 3, 1981. As it flushed from the subcanopy of tall forest its typical *Buteo* shape, relatively short blackish tail with two white bands, mottled dark brown back, dark chestnut upper breast, and barred lower breast were seen. Another individual, this one an immature, was seen in the same locality, also in the subcanopy of tall forest, December 22-23, 1981 (with R. A. Rowlett *et al.*). Although superficially similar to the immatures of several resident species of Accipitridae, the typical short-tailed and broad-winged shape, characteristic patterning of the breast streaking, and lack of rufous or buff patches in the primaries in flight were all noted. These are the first records of the species reported from Suriname (Haverschmidt 1968, Meyer de Schauensee 1970, Blake 1977). The species has not been reported from Guyana (Snyder 1966, Meyer de Schauensee 1970, Blake 1977), and although reported from French Guiana, Blake (1977) suggested that it may be accidental there. However, the presence of individuals during two successive winters suggests that in Suriname the species may be a rare but regular winter visitant to elevated forest regions of the interior, such as the Mazaroni Plateau.

POMARINE JAEGER (*Stercorarius pomarinus*) — A subadult light-morph bird was observed for a couple of minutes as it harassed two Laughing Gulls (*Larus atricilla*) offshore from the mouth of the Coppename River, about 90 km west of Paramaribo, January 3, 1982 (with R. A. Rowlett *et al.*). As it was a subadult in rather worn plumage, lacking elongated central tail feathers, it was identified principally by its husky build, heavy flight, and distinctly larger size than the two Laughing Gulls it was chasing. It showed a brown cap darker than the back, heavy brown flank barring, and a whitish, unbarred central lower breast and belly. Although previously unrecorded from Suriname (Haverschmidt 1968, Meyer de Schauensee 1970, Blake 1977), the species is known from coastal Guyana and northeastern Brazil (Snyder 1966, Blake 1977), and is reported by Meyer de Schauensee and Phelps (1978) to be common in winter off the Venezuelan coast.

VARIEGATED ANTPITTA (*Gallinula varia*) — The nest of this species does not seem to have been described previously. On December 22, 1981, Rose Ann Rowlett and I discovered a nest of this species in tall forest atop the Mazaroni Plateau in the Brownsberg Nature Park. The nest, a shallow cup constructed of damp rootlets and mosses, was set in a depression or crevice along the trunk of a large *Ficus*-like tree, 1.0-1.1 m above the ground. It contained two turquoise-blue eggs, one of which measured 33.5 × 26.5 mm. The eggs, nest, and nest site fit well into the general pattern for the Gallinariinae as described by Wiedenfeld (1982). When we returned to check on the nest again December 23, we were able to observe one of the adults incubating. It sat on the nest facing outward, with its bill slightly uptilted. This posture presented a rather striking pattern. The long white moustache marks and large

spot on the upper breast were shown to best advantage, broken up by the dark throat and bill. The large areas of white resembled the patches of whitish lichen growing on the tree trunk. At the same time this posture minimized the amount that could be seen of the large dark eyes, the feature that is often noted first on an antpitta in the undergrowth. When the bird finally left the nest it flew just a short distance, then dropped to the ground and rapidly ran, rather than hopped, off into the undergrowth.

Atop the Mazaroni Plateau this species is uncommon but regular in the undergrowth of tall, humid forest, where it is sympatric with the smaller Spotted Antpitta (*Hylopezus macularius*) and still smaller Thrush-like Antpitta (*Myrmothera companiona*). Here it is seldom seen but is often heard. Its song is a series of about six low-pitched, wooden-sounding hooting notes, similar to the measured hooting song of the Thrush-like Antpitta, but lower-pitched, and increasing in tempo towards the end. As the species has not yet to my knowledge been recorded from the fairly well-worked but lower-lying Raleigh Falls-Voltzberg National Park, and as the only locality for the species mentioned by Haverschmidt (1968) is the Kayser Mountains, this species probably has a preference for elevated forest regions in Suriname.

BOAT-BILLED TODY-TYRANT (*Micrococcyzus urophasianus*) — The Boat-billed Tody-Tyrant is a small, rather nondescript, olive-green flycatcher. Its only outstanding features are its yellowish belly, buff crissum, and, for the size of the bird, long and wide bill with a pale flesh-colored lower mandible. The very few specimens of this species that have been collected seem to indicate that it is a rather rare bird occurring across the Guianas and into the state of Amapá in northeastern Brazil. The species is known in

Suriname from a single specimen, now in the Field Museum of Natural History, originally identified as "*Tolmomyias species*" (J. Fitzpatrick, *pers. comm.*).

During thirteen days of field work near the Voltzberg Mountain in the Raleigh Falls-Voltzberg National Park in February and December of 1981, one or two individuals of this species were seen or heard almost daily, representing a total of at least seven individuals. Here the species was an inconspicuous member of mixed-species foraging flocks in the upper understory and subcanopy of relatively low, vine-tangled forest. Most often it was located by its falling *pic-pic-pic* call. It was seen at heights ranging from 3 to 12 m above the ground, most often in the 6-9 m range, where it foraged near vine tangles, making short upward sally-gleans of foliage and branches. The regularity with which the species was recorded in the Voltzberg area suggested that it may be fairly widespread over the interior of Suriname in areas of similar forest type.

GRAY-CHEEKED THRUSH (*Catharus minimus*) — An individual of this species was observed in the undergrowth of tall forest adjacent to a rather open area near the Voltzberg Mountain, in the Raleigh Falls-Voltzberg National Park Feb-

ruary 22, 1981. It flushed from near the ground up to a perch 3-4 m above the ground, where it was possible to carefully observe its gray auriculars, narrow and dull eyering, grayish-brown upperparts, and prominent spotting on the upper breast. Although this is the first record of the species from Suriname (Meyer de Schauensee 1970, Haverschmidt 1968), it is apparently a regular winter visitant to Guyana (Snyder 1966) and Venezuela (Meyer de Schauensee and Phelps 1978), and therefore not unexpected in Suriname.

BLACKBURNIAN WARBLER (*Dendroica fusca*) — A male in apparent breeding plumage was observed along the Carolina Road, about 45 km south-southeast of Paramaribo December 26, 1981 (with R.A. Rowlett *et al.*). It was alone, in a tall isolated tree in an area of low second growth, about 50 to 75 m from the edge of tall forest. Wintering principally in the Andes of South America, the species has not previously been recorded from Suriname, or any of the Guianas, and apparently this is the farthest south the species has been recorded down the eastern side of South America (Snyder 1966, Haverschmidt 1968, Meyer de Schauensee 1970).

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I WISH TO THANK the staff of STINASU (Stichting Natuurbehoud Suriname), who facilitated my stays at the Brownsberg Nature Park and Raleigh Falls-Voltzberg National Park and travels to the Coppename Monding Reserve

LITERATURE CITED

- BLAKE, E.R. 1977. Manual of Neotropical Birds. Vol. 1. University of Chicago Press, Chicago.
- DONAHUE, P.K. and J.E. PIERSON 1982. Birds of Suriname — An Annotated Checklist. South Harpswell, Maine
- HAVERSCHMIDT, F. 1968. The Birds of Suriname. Oliver & Boyd, Edinburgh
- MEYER DE SCHAUENSEE, R. 1970. A Guide to the Birds of South America. Livingston Publ. Co., Wynnewood, Pa
- and W.H. PHELPS, Jr. 1978. A Guide to the Birds of Venezuela. Princeton Univ. Press, Princeton, N.J.
- SNYDER, D.E. 1966. The Birds of Guyana. Peabody Museum, Peabody, Mass
- WIEDENFELD, D. 1982. A nest of the Pale-billed Antpitta (*Grallaria carrikeri*) with comparative remarks on antpitta nests. *Wilson Bull.* 94: 580-582.

—P.O. Box 1036,
Brunswick, ME 04011

..... from the editor's desk

In *AMERICAN BIRDS*, January-February 1984 (Volume 38, Number 1) we announced the Robert Arbib Prize. This prize was instituted and funded by Robert Arbib in 1984, upon his retirement from the National Audubon Society. The \$250 cash award has as its intended function "... to encourage amateurs to contribute articles of quality to *AMERICAN BIRDS*..." The prize money goes to the author or authors of the paper judged to be the best contribution by an amateur or graduate student published in each volume of *AMERICAN BIRDS*. The judges are three ornithologists not on the staff of the National Audubon Society and not the major professors of any possible candidates. The winners of the Robert Arbib Prize for 1984, Volume 38, are Richard R. Veit and Lars Jonsson for their superb article entitled "Field identification of smaller sandpipers within the genus *Calidris*." This article appeared in *AMERICAN BIRDS*, September-October 1984, Volume 38, Number 5. We congratulate the authors and encourage them to continue to submit such landmark articles to us. The winning article stands as a fine example of the recent advances in field identification not found in pocket-sized field guides. We are proud to have published it along with the excellent paintings and line drawings of one of today's top flight bird artists—Lars Jonsson. Cheers and applause for Veit and Jonsson.

We regret very much that we must announce that it has become necessary to raise the subscription rates of *AMERICAN BIRDS*, effective with this issue. We delayed taking such action as long as we possibly could. We last announced an increase in our subscription rates in May 1982, and have held at those rates for over three years. This has meant, in effect, a considerable subsidy to subscribers. However, over these past three years 100% of production costs have increased, including paper, typesetting, etc. Of course, we would have much rather reduced our annual deficit and met our annual costs by adding subscribers. There is no doubt that we must also add to our circulation level. To do this we need the dedicated support of you, the reader. If you enjoy *AMERICAN BIRDS*, please help by spreading the word. Every new subscription counts. If each of our subscribers could bring in one new subscription, our circulation would double and we would be able to close in on our expanding deficit. Remember that a year's subscription to *AMERICAN BIRDS* makes a terrific birthday and/or Christmas gift. In adding new subscribers you will be helping to keep our new rates stabilized longer. We need your help and welcome it.

From this end, the National Audubon Society strongly supports *AMERICAN BIRDS*, and we will therefore continue to bring you our four seasonal issues and our gigantic Christmas Bird Count issue. We are busily preparing the CBC issue and expect to have it in our readers' hands well before the snow flies. We are working on preparation of the Christmas Bird Count packets, which will be mailed out to CBC compilers by mid-October. From all of the correspondence received here, the 1985-1986 Christmas Bird Count promises to be bigger and better than ever before. Remember that the dates of this year's count are December 18, 1985 through January 5, 1986 (inclusive). This includes three full weekends. The participation fee will not be raised this year. That is, it will remain at the level we reluctantly set last year—\$3.00 per participant per count.

Although this Summer 1985 issue is slightly late, the Autumn 1985 will follow it absolutely on time. We thank all of those observers, regional and other editors, authors and support staff for helping us to closely adhere to our publication schedule.

Finally we sincerely welcome our new Editorial Assistant, Fredrick Baumgarten, to our staff, here in New York. He is an avid birder, a responsible and exceedingly competent staff member, and an accomplished pianist besides. We lucked out again!!

Stay tuned!

—S R D