

Faunistics

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FIRST RECORD OF THE SPECKLED MOURNER (*Laniocera rufescens*) FOR THE PETÉN DEPARTMENT OF GUATEMALA

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On 21 March 1995, we detected three male Speckled Mourners (*Laniocera rufescens*, Tyrannidae) approximately 1 km south of the archeological site Nakúm, on the eastern edge of the Maya Biosphere Reserve, in the Petén Department of Guatemala, at c. 17°4.38' N and 89°23.78' W and an approximate elevation of 250 m. To our knowledge this species has not previously been recorded in the Petén.

During our observation at Nakúm, three individuals were heard vocalizing between 50 and 150 m apart. One individual was perched 8 m above the ground, at the lower surface of the canopy, and was identified by plumage and vocalizations (Stiles & Skutch 1989, Howell & Webb 1995). This bird was uniformly cinnamon brown, with distinctly visible yellow patches on the sides of the breast. Poor lighting beneath the canopy accounted for the fact that the light barring of the breast, and indistinct wing bars were not observed. The bird was observed vocalizing several times. The vocalization was two whistled notes, the first rather soft and the second sharper and accented, similar to the opening notes of a Thrushlike Mourner (*Schiffornis turdimus*), but higher pitched and thinner. This behavior and spatial organization is nearly identical to those described by Stiles & Skutch (1989) of males gathering in loose groups, with individuals spaced 50–100 m apart, and repeatedly vocalizing from regular perches.

The birds were on an east-facing slope in an area of upland forest, as defined by Schulze

(1992) and Whitacre *et al.* (1995). The forest had a tall (20–30 m), even canopy, relatively open shrub/sapling layer and sparse ground cover. Common tree genera of upland forest include *Pouteria*, *Manilkara*, *Winmeria*, *Brosimum*, *Pseudolmedia*, *Trichilia*, and *Aspidosperma* while the understory is characterized by an abundance of *Piper* spp. and relatively few palms and vines (Schulze 1992).

The Speckled Mourner's known range extends from Oaxaca, Mexico, to NW Ecuador (Binford 1989, Howell & Webb 1995). In northern Central America the species is uncommon to rare, and its distribution patchy; Griscom (1932) described it as "... one of the rarest of Central American birds..." and Slud (1964) considered it "scarce" in Costa Rica. The recognized occurrence of the Speckled Mourner in Guatemala appears to have been based entirely upon a handful of skins from the Cobán area (see Ridgway 1907, Hellmayr 1929, Griscom 1932 and Land 1970) and a recent record from Cerro San Gil, Izabal (Howell & Webb 1992). The species is not mentioned by Smithe (1966) nor Beavers (1992) in their lists for Tikal National Park and the surrounding area. In Belize, Wood *et al.* (1986) listed the species as "very rare" for the southern and northern regions of the country, with fewer than five records in each area. Most recently Howell & Webb (1995) showed the species' northern limit as stretching from the gulf coast foothills of northern Oaxaca and Chiapas, through Cobán and across the

Caribbean lowlands of Guatemala and Belize. Presumed breeding is indicated for the Cobán and Cerro San Gil areas, and for central Belize, but none in Petén. Our record, ca. 170 km NE of Cobán, apparently is the first for Petén.

Quantitative sampling and qualitative impressions have revealed a generally high degree of similarity in terrestrial avifauna between disparate sites in northern Petén (Whitacre, unpubl. data). Despite this similarity, however, species such as the Speckled Mourner may occur at low densities and with patchy distributions, underlining the importance of a continued effort to record the distribution of bird life in Petén.

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