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LONGEVITY RECORDS OF WILD BIRDS IN THE HENRI PITTIER NATIONAL PARK, VENEZUELA

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Récords de longevidad de algunas aves del Parque Nacional Henri Pittier, Venezuela.

Key words: Longevity, Neotropical birds, Paso Portachuelo, Parque Nacional Henri Pittier, Venezuela.

Estimation of longevity and survival rates of wild birds, as well as their relationships with other aspects of bird life history (e.g., clutch size and nesting success), are interesting subjects in tropical bird ecology. Although birds rank among the most studied vertebrates, direct information about the longevity of Neotropical species is scarce. Available information includes longevity records of some birds from Trinidad (Snow & Lill 1974), Brazil (Lopes *et al.* 1980, Pereira *et al.* 1992) and Panama (Willis 1983, 1985).

We report longevity records obtained during a 12-year bird monitoring project in Henri

Pittier National Park, Venezuela. This project has 12 field sites located in different habitats throughout the national park. Data presented herein represent the results of monitoring at Paso Portachuelo, which is an important pass for migrant and resident birds (Beebe 1947). Paso Portachuelo (10° 22'N, 67° 41'W; 1136 m) is located near the Estación Biológica de Rancho Grande, on the ridge of the Cordillera de la Costa of Venezuela. Annual rainfall averages 1600 mm and mean annual temperature is 20°C. The vegetation of the area is characterized by extensive cloud forest (Huber 1996).

During 1990–1999, we surveyed this site 3 days per month, except in the boreal fall (September–October), when nets were opened during 40 days. In 2000 and 2001, the study was carried out for at least 40 days during the boreal fall, but not at other times of the year.

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TABLE 1. Longevity records obtained at Paso Portachuelo field station, Henri Pittier National Park, Venezuela, between 1990 and 2001.

Species	Sex ¹	Date of capture (month/day/year)	Date of last recapture (month/ day/year)	Number of recaptures	Longevity record (years-months)
White-collared Swift (<i>Streptoprocne zonaris</i>)	U	02/25/91	04/18/96	1	5-1
Gray-rumped Swift (<i>Chaetura cinereiventris</i>)	U	09/28/94	10/16/01	2	7-0
Vaux's Swift (<i>Chaetura vauxi</i>)	U	09/17/91	11/03/01	1	10-1
White-tipped Swift (<i>Aeronautes montivagus</i>)	U	06/20/91	10/26/01	6	10-4
Guttulated Foliage-gleaner (<i>Syndactyla guttulata</i>)	U	10/02/91	10/20/01	6	10-0
Plain-brown Woodcreeper (<i>Dendrocincla fuliginosa</i>)	F	04/30/92	10/10/01	5	9-5
Olivaceous Woodcreeper (<i>Sittasomus griseicapillus</i>)	U	08/12/93	10/13/00	9	7-2
Handsome Fruiteater (<i>Pipreola formosa</i>)	F	09/17/91	10/11/97	3	6-0
Slate-headed Tody-Flycatcher (<i>Todirostrum sylvia</i>) ²	U	03/20/93	05/22/99	2	6-2
Olive-striped Flycatcher (<i>Mionectes olivaceus</i>)	M	09/18/91	10/07/00	10	9-0
Gray-breasted Wren (<i>Henicorbina leucophrys</i>)	U	09/28/94	10/12/00	1	6-0
Black-hooded Thrush (<i>Turdus olivater</i>)	F	10/16/92	02/24/99	3	6-4
Slate-throated Redstart (<i>Myioborus miniatus</i>)	M	10/02/91	07/31/98	12	6-9
Common Bush-Tanager (<i>Chlorospingus ophthalmicus</i>)	U	10/19/94	10/20/00	2	6-0
Gray-headed Tanager (<i>Eucometis penicillata</i>)	U	04/21/93	10/04/01	3	8-5
Palm Tanager (<i>Thraupis palmarum</i>)	U	02/24/91	10/12/00	1	9-7
Golden Tanager (<i>Tangara arthus</i>)	U	11/14/90	01/29/98	21	7-2
Black-capped Tanager (<i>Tangara beinei</i>)	U	10/02/92	10/12/98	1	6-0

¹U - unknown; M - male; F - female.

²This individual was marked and recaptured in semi-deciduous forest at El Limón (10° 18'N, 67° 38'W; 450 m), within Parque Nacional Henri Pittier.

Birds were captured using 10–14 12-m mist nets with 30 and 36 mm mesh, and banded with numbered aluminum bands. We also recorded weight, molt, and morphological measurements of all individuals captured, and sex, reproductive condition, and age, when possible. Sex was determined by plumage coloration, morphological measurements, or, in some cases, by presence of brood patch. Longevity or minimal age of an individual was quantified based on its first and last documented captures.

In Table 1, we present longevity records, ranging 6–10 years, for 18 species of birds. The highest longevity record was registered for the White-tipped Swift (*Aeronautes montivagus*: 10 years, 4 months). Although data on the life span of this species have not been published before, an individual of 12 years and 4 months was marked and recaptured by C. Collins in 1993 at Rancho Grande (C. Collins & T. Ryan pers. com.). In the case of the Vaux's Swift (*Chaetura vauxi*: 10 years, 1 month), previous studies have reported a minimal age of 5 years in the USA (Bull & Collins 1995) and in Rancho Grande (Clapp *et al.* 1983). Longevity data obtained in Estación Biológica Rancho Grande and Paso Portachuelo, after only 12 years of banding studies, allow us to speculate that life expectancy of these two species might be longer. Data for the White-collared Swift (*Streptoprocne zonaris*) and the Gray-rumped Swift (*Chaetura cinereiventris*) could not be found in the literature in spite of their broad geographic distribution (Phelps & Meyer de Schauensee 1978). All swifts were banded and recaptured at Paso Portachuelo with exception of the White-tipped Swift, which was banded and recaptured five times in the Estación Biológica Rancho Grande and last recaptured at Paso Portachuelo.

Among forest dwellers, we recorded a minimal age of 10 years for the Guttulated Foliage-gleaner (*Syndactyla guttulata*), an

endemic of the Cordillera de la Costa. For the Plain-brown Woodcreeper (*Dendrocincla fuliginosa*), our record of 9 years and 5 months is comparable to those reported by Snow & Lill (1974) in Trinidad (10 years, 5 months), and Willis (1983) on Barro Colorado Island, Panama (11 years, 5 months). The record for the Gray-headed Tanager (*Eucometis penicillata*: 8 years, 5 months) is also high but lower than that of 10 years reported by Willis (1985). Our record for the Olivaceous Woodcreeper (*Sittasomus griseicapillus*) with 7 years and 2 months shows a greater longevity compared to previous report of 5 years, 11 months by Pereira *et al.* (1992). Other interesting records were found for the Palm Tanager (*Thraupis palmarum*: 9 years, 7 months), the Olive-striped Flycatcher (*Mionectes olivaceus*: 9 years), and the Golden Tanager (*Tangara arthus*: 7 years, 2 months).

Almost all birds recaptured at Paso Portachuelo were netted within 120 m of the site where they were banded. We recorded only one individual of Yellow-legged Thrush (*Platycicbla flavipes*) last recaptured in Paso Portachuelo and banded in our semi-deciduous forest site at Guamitas (10° 20'N, 67° 39'W; 775 m), approximately 15 km SW of Paso Portachuelo. Further analysis of the data obtained in our banding stations will allow us to estimate survivorship rates of birds, and have a better understanding of their movements within the Henri Pittier National Park and between the slopes of the Cordillera de la Costa.

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