

A NOTE ON THE TOUCANS OF NORTHERN ARGENTINA

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THE Saffron Toucanet (*Bailloni* *bailloni*) pictured opposite is also known as the Saffron-colored Araçari, Banana Araçari, and Yellow Toucanet. Peters, in his "Check-List of Birds of the World" (1948. VI:81), reduced monotypic *Bailloni* to a subgenus of *Andigena*. The species is confined to southeastern Brazil, Paraguay, and the province of Misiones in Argentina.

On 15 September 1959, less than a mile from our camp near Tobunas, Misiones, William H. Partridge and I saw this single bird feeding with a small group of Red-breasted Toucans (*Ramphastos discolorus*). They were in the crown of a tree laden with perfectly round purple-black fruit the size of a large grape, called *Yvaporú* in the local Guaraní tongue and *Yaboticaba* in Portuguese. The Saffron Toucanet was less active than its associates and spent a good deal of time sitting upright as I have painted it—a pose that does not, however, show off its red upper tail coverts. As soon as it had been collected and we got back to camp, I set to work drawing and painting in the bill colors which in toucans may change very rapidly. The picture was completed the following day.

The two common toucans of Argentina belong to the genus *Ramphastos*. The huge-billed Toco Toucan (*R. toco albigularis*) ranges west and south until stopped by arid and open country, but reappears in the form of the nominate race in northwestern Argentina where a wet tropical spur reaches Tucumán. I found this species more common around Iguazú Falls than at our Tobunas camp where *R. discolorus* was the one seen daily.

I once watched a Red-breasted Toucan attempt to get at the eggs or young in a nest of the Great Kiskadee (*Pitangus sulphuratus*). The flycatchers soon drove it off, one attacking the frantic toucan first from one side and then from the other while its mate grasped the big bird in the middle of its back, fanned its tail for better support, and rode that toucan right into the woods.

The Red-breasted Toucan, like the Saffron Toucanet, is relatively small billed, though I noted that there was tremendous variation in bill size and considerable in the width of the alizarin center stripe in Partridge's specimens, a variability which did not seem to be at all related to sex. The range of the species in Argentina is approximately that of *R. t. albigularis*.

The fourth Argentine species is a particularly handsome araçari (*Pteroglossus castanotis*) found only in Misiones, though it has a broad range to the north. A hunter brought two of them into camp one day too late to paint and they proved to be the only ones seen during the month I was there.

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