

Birds develop a taste for sugar—It is a common occurrence for Bananaquits (*Coereba flaveola*) in the West Indies to visit the sugar bowls of dining tables to secure one of their favorite foods. On some of the islands, "sugar bird" is the familiar name for this species. Many residents, hotels, and restaurants, cater to their appetites by placing bowls of sugar along porch rails. Some eating places, however, inquire of the guest "how many spoonsful," and serve the coffee, or the iced drink, according to direction rather than place the sugar within easy reach on the table. Thus they try to avoid annoyance to guests who might object to having the tiny and colorful birds eat from the sugar bowl, take a drink from the water glass, and bathe in the finger bowl. We have watched with much pleasure the birds doing all of these things at the Piscadera Bay Club in Curaçao.

It was a distinct surprise, on returning to Tobago this past April, to find species of birds other than the Bananaquit now relishing sugar. At the Arnos Vale in Plymouth, where we stayed with the Florida Audubon Tour Party, two species of tanagers, the Blue-gray (*Thraupis virens*) and the White-lined (*Tachyphonus rufus*), and one species of woodpecker, the Little Red-headed (*Centurus rubicapillus*) came steadily to the sugar dishes from early morning to dusk. This zest for sugar probably dates back to the period following the hurricane of September 1963, when much of the foliage was blown off the trees and shrubs. Food was scarce, and many people interested in birds found them thronging about their houses in search of food. Egbert Lau of the Bird of Paradise Inn, Speyside, wrote us soon after the hurricane that he had 50 or more Blue-gray Tanagers at one time feeding largely on bananas and other fruits which the tanagers regularly relish. Alexander Skutch (1954, "Life Histories of Central American Birds, *Pacific Coast Avifauna*, 31) speaks of their coming regularly to his feeding shelves, but the main food offered and taken seems to be bananas. Apparently, the habit of eating sugar was a direct result of the shortage of regular foods, and perhaps they imitated the Bananaquits which were already sugar addicts.

Will this habit remain fixed? It is possible that it will, for in April of 1964, more than 6 months after the hurricane there seemed to be plenty of natural foods to support these birds, but they continued to eat large quantities of sugar.

There were also a number of species in Tobago which came this year regularly for bread, either dry or soaked in water: Black-faced Grassquits (*Tiaris bicolor*) and other finches; Ruddy-breasted Seedeaters (*Sporophila minuta*); Blue-black Grassquit (*Volatina jacarina*); and Yellow-bellied Seedeater (*Sporophila nigricollis*); also, doves such as Eared (*Zenaida auriculata*) and White-fronted (*Leptotila verreauxi*). Surprisingly the Barred Antshrike (*Thamnophilus doliatus*) seemed to relish this food. Other species which partook of the bread, included: Glossy Cowbird (*Molothrus bonariensis*); Antillean Grackle (*Quiscalus lugubris*); Tropical Mockingbird (*Mimus gilvus*); and Bare-eyed Thrush (*Turdus nudigenis*). Blue-crowned Motmots (*Momotus momota*) had also learned to depend on human aid. One bird in particular would regularly take a cherry from the palm of a guest. Furthermore, these birds would appear at the breakfast table of guests, perch on the back of a chair, or the table itself, and take bits of papaya and watermelon. A guest awoke one morning to find a motmot sitting on the bedrail waiting patiently for a breakfast snack.—MARGARET H. HUNDLEY AND C. RUSSELL MASON, *Florida Audubon Society, Maitland, Florida, 1 February 1965.*