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On a Nest of the Planalto Woodcreeper, *Dendrocolaptes platyrostris*, with Taxonomic and Conservation Notes

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ABSTRACT.—A pair of Planalto Woodcreepers (*Dendrocolaptes platyrostris*) fed young in a nest cavity 6 m up in a wooded botanic garden of an old eucalyptus grove near São Paulo, Brazil, during October 1982. The pair often visited together at first, one (likely male) raising its head feathers as noted in other species of the genus. Feedings were less frequent at midday. Songs of the southeastern moist forest *D. p. platyrostris* were strikingly different from inland dry forest *D. p. intermedius*, despite intermediate specimens where the two rather distinctly colored forms come together. There are several poorly studied forms in interior dry forests, which need much more conservation effort. Received 12 Mar. 2001, accepted 24 Aug. 2001.

Willis (1982, 1992) studied ant-following woodcreepers of the genus *Dendrocolaptes* (Dendrocolaptidae), and presented brief notes on the Planalto Woodcreeper (*D. platyrostris*). Nesting behavior in the genus is little known. Here we report observations at a nest of the species, and discuss vocal differences between woodcreepers inhabiting the interior dry forest (*D. p. intermedius*) and those of eastern/southern moist forest (*D. p. platyrostris*).

On 3 October 1982, we discovered a nest at the height of 6 m in a trunk slit of an *arariba* (*Centrolobium tomentosum*, Leguminosae) in an open woods botanic garden (590 m altitude, 22° 25' S, 47° 31' W) of the eucalyptus plantations of the 2300-ha Horto Florestal of Rio Claro, São Paulo, Brazil. The species occurred in small numbers in the Horto, where eucalyptus was allowed to grow for 40–50 yr,

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with dense natural undergrowth, before large tracts were logged during 1985–1993. Since partial logging, the woodcreeper has survived only in uncut zones (EOW pers. obs.). Few army ants survive, the only species being *Labidus praedator*, and the woodcreeper has never been seen at a swarm there. It has been observed low over ants in several forest areas. EOW once saw one in an isolated creek wood (715 m, 22° 15' S, 47° 52' W) in *cerrado* at Itirapina try to fly low over a wide open pasture early in the day, but it returned after 200 m. During 1982 we watched a pair of Planalto Woodcreepers feeding young in the nest from 07:30–13:00 on 4 October, 07:20–12:05 on 5 October, and 06:56–09:58 on 10 October. On 15 October the nest seemed abandoned.

As in other members of the genus, one adult was sleek headed and dominant (female) and one ruff headed and submissive (male). In a nearby woodlot, during February 1984, a sleek-headed bird attacked but the ruff-headed one then approached. Both were silent near the nest, circling behind trunks and hitching up or down after leaving the nest. They sometimes flitted their wings. Once the female sallied from near the nest to capture a spider on the ground 1.5 m from the trunk, and took it to the young. Another time she sallied twice to bromeliad leaves 10 m up on a trunk, but did not return. Once each, the male and female pecked a flake of bark on a trunk. Once, the female captured prey on the ground, battered it on a trunk, and ate it. At times, both birds wandered low on trunks toward the eucalyptus woods 100 m south, or arrived with food in the beak from that direction some 4–6 m up. At dawn on 5 July 1979 at Carlos Botelho State Park headquarters (770 m, 24° 03' S, 47° 59' W), in a similarly open edge wood, one visited an electric light for insects.

The bird arriving with food looked about carefully and crouched or paused, the female being especially wary. From 08:25–08:44 on 4 October, for instance, the female crouched and finally retreated without feeding the young; then the male brought food to the young from 08:44–08:46, flying to land near her on a distant trunk. From 10:57–11:33 she waited at the entrance with food, letting the male enter before entering herself to feed. On 5 October she paused behind the trunk from 07:32–07:41, after the male fed the young, she

also fed the young and waited until 07:57 looking out from the hole. Then she left the nest and hitched up behind the trunk at 08:00 before leaving the tree. From 10:56–11:29 she waited behind the nest trunk after a feeding. On 10 October she waited from 07:02–07:16 to feed young, until the male approached.

Flying to the nest trunk, the bird would either slip in sideways or hitch up or down to enter, at times with a 30-s pause. On 5 October, the male stayed in the nest from 10:33–10:42. Leaving, it would pause 1–4 min above the nest or at the entrance before flying off, except twice when carrying a fecal sac 50 m away; perhaps other sacs were eaten in the nest. On 4 October the female waited from 12:12–12:35 just above the nest after delivering two spiders at 12:10 and 12:12; the male delivered a second spider captured at 12:11 on ground.

From 4–5 October the male and female came to feed young together eight times and separately four times each. None of the nine feedings on 10 October were made together, suggesting that earlier joint visits may have been related to brooding alternation (with pair encounters). The male and female provisioned equally the first two days; on 10 October solitary visits did not result in the male raising his crest, hence the sex of the provisioning bird often was uncertain.

Rate of food delivery was 2.5/h from 07:00–11:00 and 1.6/h from 11:00–13:00. Totals of 13 feedings on the 4th, 12 on the 5th, and 9 on the 10th indicated rather constant rates.

TAXONOMY AND CONSERVATION

The Planalto Woodcreepers at the Horto and nearby 230-ha Fazenda São José sang only the long descending series, 58 notes/s, previously noted for *D. p. platyrostris* (Willis 1982). EOW has noted this song in several other coastal localities during recent years. He heard only the song of *D. p. intermedius*, a different “urit urit urit urit” series, during 1996 in small forests at Fazenda Limoeira (330 m, 19° 48' S, 50° 27' W) in Arabá and on the Rio São José dos Dourados (400 m, 20° 29' S, 50° 11' W) in Valentim Gentil, and tape recorded two such birds at Fazenda Brazil (370 m, 20° 28' S, 51° 01' W) in Suzanópolis.

Each of these two song types also occur in

another species: the long descending series in Amazonian Barred-Woodcreepers (*Dendrocolaptes certhia*) and the "urit" series west of the Andes in a population now recognized as Northern Barred-Woodcreepers (*D. sanctithomae*; Willis 1992) and Marantz (1997). One might suggest also separating the two forms of *D. platyrostris*, but intermediate specimens have been collected from Paraguay (Marantz 1997) and São Paulo (Bebedouro: 570 m, 20° 57' S, 48° 29' W; Ituverava: 606 m, 20° 20' S, 47° 47' W), the latter deposited in the Museum of Zoology of the Univ. of São Paulo. The two forms differ rather strikingly in back color (unstreaked in *D. p. intermedius*) and crown (blackish in *D. p. platyrostris*; Ridgely and Tudor 1994). If separated, *D. intermedius* would become the Planalto Woodcreeper and *D. platyrostris* the Southeastern Woodcreeper.

Similar vocal or plumage differences occur in three other species in dry forests of northwestern São Paulo. The White-bellied Warbler (*Basileuterus hypoleucus*) has a "chip" call similar to that of a Tropical Parula (*Parula pitiayumi*) in Arabá, Suzanópolis, and other regions there, north to Brasília and west to near Bolivia, but unlike the normal "chiff" call in central and eastern São Paulo. Interestingly, this "chiff" call also is given by the Yellow-bellied Golden-crowned Warbler (*B. culicivorus*) in eastern São Paulo, where there are occasional mixed pairs (but EOW observed a white-bellied "*hypoleucus*" rather than intermediate offspring for one such pair in the field near Aracaçu in southern São Paulo [670 m, 23° 39' S, 48° 31' W]). The two may be conspecific (W. R. Silva pers. comm.), but one does not know if the "chip" birds are different. The Yellow-Olive Flycatcher (*Tolmomyias s. sulphurescens*) of eastern São Paulo gives way to *T. s. pallescens*, with different plumage and voice, in northwestern São Paulo. Most field workers now agree that *T. sulphurescens* will have to be divided into these two and other species. Finally, chachalacas (*Ortalis guttata*) of unknown subspecies, perhaps *O. g. remota* of Mato Grosso (Pinto 1978), were observed during a 1996 trip on the Rio Turvo of Fazenda São João (440 m, 20° 32' S, 49° 12' W) in Nova Granada, and

in Fazenda Vista Bonita, Barretos, on the Córrego Anhumas (460 m, 20° 29' S, 48° 48' W), always near rivers.

As dry forests are almost completely destroyed in central and southwestern Brazil, with hardly any government reserves, conservation efforts are necessary to preserve poorly studied populations. The situation is close to disaster. For instance, there are very few preserved dry forests in northwestern São Paulo or in the entire state of Mato Grosso do Sul, with reservoirs and river dredging planned everywhere to export increasing crops. *Sem-terra* or "landless poor" farm programs often receive land (purchased with tax money) and destroy natural areas, rather than use already cutover zones as practiced further east, where such programs are much more environmentally oriented. So far, only moist Atlantic forests and wet Pantanal waterbirds, plus to a lesser extent disappearing savannas (Parker and Willis 1997), have attracted attention in Brazil and internationally.

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