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FIRST DESCRIPTION OF THE NEST AND EGG OF THE GRAY-HEADED WARBLER (*BASILEUTERUS GRISEICEPS*)

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Primera descripción del nido y huevo del Chiví Cabecigris (*Basileuterus griseiceps*).

Key words: Gray-headed Warbler, *Basileuterus griseiceps*, Parulidae, nest, egg, Serranía de Turimiquire, Venezuela.

The Gray-headed Warbler (*Basileuterus griseiceps*) is restricted to mountain forests (from 1400 to 2440 m) in the Serranía de Turimiquire, including both Turimiquire and Caripe Massifs, in northeastern Venezuela (Vila 1960, Curson *et al.* 1994, Lentino *et al.* 2005), an area of great biological importance due to its high level of floral and faunal endemism (Steyermark 1979, Cracraft 1985). This warbler (Parulidae) is considered rare and highly threatened due to conversion of forest into agricultural land (Boesman & Curson 1995, BirdLife International 2000). Its biology is poorly known and no data are available on its breeding biology (Curson *et al.* 1994). Here we describe the first nest and egg of *Basileuterus griseiceps*, found at Cerro Negro, Caripe Massif (10°12'N, 63°34'W), Monagas, during the development of a project aiming to assess the population status of several endemic and threatened species of Venezuela's northeastern mountain region.

On 28 May 2006, we observed two adults of *B. griseiceps* vocalizing loudly and agitatedly in a shrubby area along a trail accessing the top of Cerro Negro, at 1700 m a.s.l.. One hour later, upon returning to the same place, we searched the area and encountered a nest by flushing an adult bird from it. The nest was placed 1.5 m above the ground on a steep forested slope adjacent to a trail, and hidden among grassy vegetation beside a fallen tree. The area, an old treefall gap, was characterized by secondary growth and early-successional vegetation, dominated by Poaceae and Piperaceae (Fig. 1).

The nest was a domed cup with an entrance facing the trail, and an external layer built mostly of bamboo leaves and various palm-derived materials (i.e., leaves, bract

FIG. 1. Nesting site of Gray-headed Warbler (*Basileuterus griseiceps*) at Cerro Negro, Monagas, Venezuela. The arrow points to the nest location.

strips, bark shreds; Fig. 2A). These materials, together with skelotonized, dry and decayed leaves (dicots), and interwoven small twigs, bryophytes, and rootlets (potentially orchid velamen) made up the main volume of the nest. The nest was lined with kapok, the fluffy, cream-colored fibers present in the seed pods of Bombacaceae (potentially *Pachira* in this case).

Externally, the nest was 14 cm in height, 18 cm in width, and 15 cm front to back. Internally, the total nest chamber was 5 cm high, 7 cm wide, and 8 cm deep. The nest contained a creamy subelliptical egg, speckled and blotched reddish-brown with markings more concentrated at the larger end (Fig. 2B). The egg was warm, weighted 2.0 g and measured 20.0 x 15.0 mm. On 31 May we returned to the site and found the nest empty, and a single cold egg on the ground outside the nest. The nest, however, was undisturbed. We were unable to locate any adults and suspected the nest was abandoned. Egg and nest are deposited at the Colección Ornitológica Phelps (COP).

The nest of *Basileuterus griseiceps* is a domed nest similar to those built by other species in the genus, both in position and general architecture (Curson *et al.* 1994, Greeney *et al.* 2005). The egg was also similar in shape and coloration to others in the genus. The presence of only one egg, which differs from average clutch sizes given for *Basileuterus* (2–4 eggs, Curson *et al.* 1994), suggests that we observed an incomplete clutch. Our presence may have precluded clutch completion as

FIG. 2. A) Nest of Gray-headed Warbler (*Basileuterus griseiceps*). The arrow points to the nest entrance. B) Egg of Gray-headed Warbler.

other species in the genus, such as Three-striped Warbler (*Basileuterus tristriatus*), are prone to abandon the nest after perturbations during laying period, even with little disturbance (J. I. Areta pers. com.). Boesman & Curson (1995) suggested that the reproductive period of this species extends May to July (rainy season), based on the presence of juveniles in August at Cerro Negro. The evidence presented here is congruent with this breeding season.

The nest of *B. griseiceps* described here was found in a forest clearing associated with a small remnant patch of cloud forest at Cerro Negro where a potentially small population of the species has been routinely observed (Boesman & Curson 1995, Brooks 2000). We recommend further research on its breeding biology in other areas, such as the Turimiquire Massif, in which current observations seem to indicate the presence of a larger population (unpubl. data). Such natural history and ecological studies are crucial to establishing appropriate conservation measures for this endangered wood-warbler.

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