

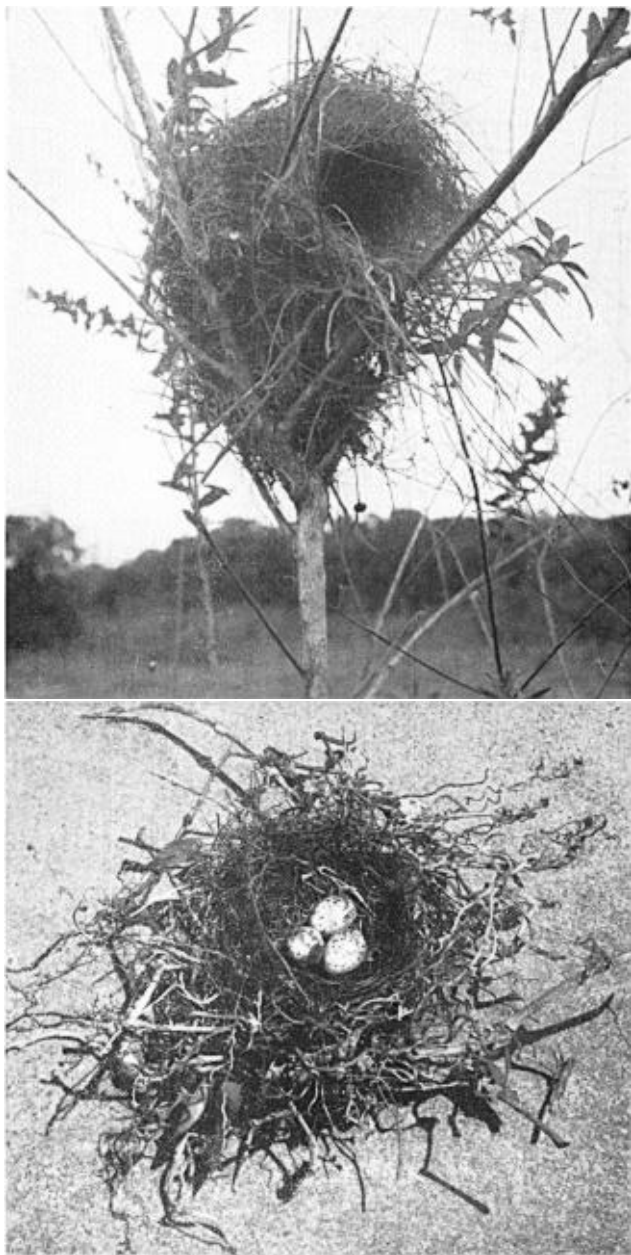
THE NESTS OF *PITANGUS LICTOR* AND
CORYPHOTRICCUS PARVUS

BY F. HAVERSCHMIDT

AMONG the numerous Tyrannidae occurring in Surinam, several are confusingly similar in coloration, but five species are particularly interesting as they differ mainly in the shape of their bills and in size. The almost identical head markings of these birds, which are considered to belong to four different genera, give the evolutionist something to ponder (Skutch, Auk, 68: 30, 1951). These five species are *Pitangus sulphuratus*, *Pitangus lictor*, *Myiozetetes cayanensis*, *Megarhynchus pitangua*, and *Coryphotriccus parvus*.

As regards their nesting, these five species can be divided in three groups, those which make a domed structure with a side entrance, those which build an open cup nest, and one which nests in holes. *Pitangus sulphuratus* builds a domed structure with a side entrance (Plate 12) as does *Myiozetetes cayanensis*, although the latter's nest is smaller and rounder. *Megarhynchus pitangua*, on the other hand, makes a rather frail open cup nest (Skutch, *op. cit.*). As early as 1910, the nest of *Pitangus lictor* was correctly described by the Penard brothers (De Vogels van Guyana, Vol. 2: 246, 1910) as "a rather flat open nest of grasses and leaves" but a number of subsequent writers apparently have confused it with the bulky domed nests of *P. sulphuratus* or *M. cayanensis*, e.g. Young (Ibis, 1929: 228), and even the much experienced Miss E. Snethlage (Journ. für Ornith., 83: 535, 1935) while H. Snethlage (Journ. für Ornith., 76: 717, 1928) apparently had never seen a nest himself as his description appears to be a literal translation of the Penards' remarks. I can corroborate the Penards' statement that *Pitangus lictor* differs wholly from *P. sulphuratus* in making an open cup nest.

On February 12, 1956, I flushed an incubating *P. lictor* from its nest in a young shade tree (*Erythrina glauca*) in the coffee plantation behind my garden near Paramaribo. The nest was made at a height of about 4 meters on a side branch of the main stem which had a diameter of about 20 cm. The tree stood at a distance of about 30 meters from one of the main trenches in the plantation where *P. lictor* as a water loving bird is ever present. I collected the sitting bird which proved to be the female (Leyden Museum No. 2417). The nest (Plate 12) was neatly built of small and dry roots and branches and the nest cup was lined with very fine dry roots. In this way it differed from the description by the Penards' as it contained no grasses or leaves whatever. The outer diameter of the nest cup was about 7



NESTS OF THE DERBY AND LICTOR FLYCATCHERS IN SURINAM. (Above) Nest of *Pitangus sulphuratus* at Zanderij, February 26, 1950. (Below) Nest of *P. lictor* at Paramaribo, February 12, 1956. Photographs by F. Haverschmidt.



NESTING OF THE WHITE-RINGED FLYCATCHER (*Coryphotriccus parvus*) AT ZANDERIJ, SURINAM, SEPTEMBER 2, 1956. (*Above*) Nest tree (arrow indicates nest hole). (*Below*) Nest and egg in opened hole. Photographs by F. Haverschmidt.

cm., its depth 3 cm. The clutch consisted of three incubated eggs, which on a creamy white ground color had a great many violet spots and blotches forming a broad ring around the large end. Their measurements were: 19×15.1 ; 19.5×15.1 ; and 18.9×15 mm.

Pitangus lictor is a common bird in the coastal area of Surinam, but it has a definitely more restricted habitat than *P. sulphuratus*, *M. cayanensis*, or *M. pitangua*, being almost wholly confined to the neighborhood of water (the edge of the mangroves; along creeks and trenches, provided these are lined, or even better, overgrown with shrubbery, bushes, and trees). Here it likes to sit on branches overhanging the water or on stakes and roots in the water, indeed very much like a kingfisher.

Now that it is shown that *P. sulphuratus* and *P. lictor* are so utterly different in their nesting one wonders whether these two species—in fact the only two of the genus *Pitangus*—are really so closely related as to warrant their inclusion in the same genus.

Coryphotriccus parvus is the rarest of the five species mentioned, Hellmayr (Field Mus. Nat. Hist. Publ. 242. Zool. Ser. 13, Part V. 1927. *Tyrannidae*: 136) did not even list it for Surinam. I collected my first specimen near Albina (Marowijne District on September 5, 1954. Now that I know its call note I am convinced that it is not rare but hitherto overlooked because of its strong resemblance to *M. cayanensis* from which it differs by a much stronger bill and a yellow instead of a white throat. Furthermore, it has apparently a restricted habitat for I only found it on sandy soil in second growth provided with some tall, dead trees, which it uses as singing posts and where it nests in holes.

I could find nothing about its nest and eggs in the literature available to me. On July 22, 1956, I observed one of these flycatchers uttering its call note from the top of a dead tree standing among second growth at Negerkreek (Marowijne District). After a short while it clung woodpecker-fashion to the stem of the tree as though inspecting a hole, but I did not see a hole in the tree. I collected the bird, which proved to be a male with greatly enlarged testes (No. 2624, Leyden Museum).

On September 2, 1956, I heard the unmistakable notes of *Coryphotriccus parvus* among second growth on sandy soil near Zanderij (about 50 km. due south of Paramaribo) in a habitat strikingly similar to that at Negerkreek. Suddenly I saw a bird disappear into an old woodpecker hole near the top in a tall dead tree (Plate 13) while a second bird alighted on the top of a tree near by. I tapped against the tree, and the bird left the hole to return after a short time. In

order to examine the contents of the hole, I had to fell the tree, and its fall was broken by the undergrowth so that the part containing the hole remained intact. On opening the hole, I found a neatly built nest made of dry grasses, which filled the bottom of the hole (Plate 13). It contained two eggs, one broken but the other one intact. The shell was rather glossy, of a cream color, and covered all over with streaks and blotches of chocolate brown, which formed an unbroken, solid, broad ring around the large end. The weight of the unblown (fresh) egg was 2.82 grams and its measurements were 20.8 × 16 mm. I collected both birds (Nos. 2682 and 2683, Leyden Museum). It was the female which had spent some time in the hole.

SUMMARY

Five species of Tyrannidae occurring in Surinam, *Pitangus sulphuratus*, *P. lictor*, *Myiozetetes cayanensis*, *Megarhynchus pitangua*, and *Coryphotriccus parvus*, are confusingly similar in coloration and have almost identical head markings but differ mainly in size and in the shape of their bills. *P. sulphuratus* and *M. cayanensis* make bulky, domed nests with a side entrance, *Megarhynchus pitangua* builds an open cup nest. There is confusion in the literature about the nesting of *P. lictor*. This species makes an open cup nest, and a nest with eggs is described. The nest and eggs of *Coryphotriccus parvus* were apparently unknown up till now. It is a hole breeder, and a nest containing two eggs in an old woodpecker hole is described.

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