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Received 3 March 1978, accepted 19 December 1979.

First Records of the Spotted Rail (*Pardirallus maculatus*) on the Island of Hispaniola

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On 17 April 1978, a bird watcher from San Francisco de Macoris brought a live rail to me for identification. He had purchased the individual from some boys who had captured it in a patch of grass in the center of a freshly plowed field (never before cultivated) at Madre Vieja, near the town of Nagua, Province of Maria Trinidad Sanchez, in the Dominican Republic.

My identification of the bird as a Spotted Rail (*Pardirallus maculatus*) was later confirmed by George Reynard and John Clements, who both saw it alive. A second bird, a male with enlarged testes, was taken in the same area on 29 June 1978 and was made into a study skin. A second specimen, taken alive at the edge of a rice field in Pimentel on 3 January 1978, died in captivity on 15 March 1978 and was injected with formalin. The two specimens are in the collection of the Museo Nacional de Historia Natural in Santo Domingo (MNHN #936 and MNHN #966). Upon investigating the general area where the birds were found, I learned that the Spotted Rail is also known from Cotuí, Rincón, municipality of San Francisco de Macoris, and Limón, all in the Yuna River basin, one of the principal rivers of Hispaniola.

George E. Watson has examined the specimens and reports that they are identical in color with Cuban and South American specimens, not with the darker, browner Central American population (*P. m. insolitus*). Although Parkes et al. (1978, *Amer. Birds* 32: 295) found that Cuban birds tended to have longer bills than South American birds, the two Hispaniolan birds have short bills (45.5 mm, and broken). Because of the variation in color and pattern as well as in bill length in Greater Antillean birds, Watson (1962, *Wilson Bull.* 74: 349; pers. comm.) does not recognize *P. m. inoptatus*.

Recent new records of the wanderings of Spotted Rails in the United States, Chile, Bolivia, and western Mexico (Parkes et al. 1978, *Amer. Birds* 32: 295) might suggest that Hispaniolan birds were vagrants or newly arrived colonists from Cuba, but Storrs Olson (pers. comm.) has examined bones from old cave deposits in the Dominican Republic that he has tentatively identified as *Pardirallus*. Allen Keith (pers. comm.) also reported an unconfirmed sighting of a Spotted Rail along the Black River, about 7 km inland in Jamaica, a location at which the bird was thought to be extinct (Bond, 1956, *Check-list of birds of the West Indies*, Philadelphia, Acad. Nat. Sci.). Because this species is hard to see and even harder to collect, it is likely that it has been an overlooked, long-time resident on Hispaniola.

I thank James Bond, Donald D. Dod, David Robinson, Francisco X. Gerales, and George E. Watson for their help with this article.

Received 14 August 1978, accepted 30 October 1979.

A Nest of the White-plumed Antbird (*Pithys albifrons*) in Surinam

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The White-plumed Antbird (*Pithys albifrons*) is one of the birds that follows army ants in the undergrowth of northern South American forests. In Surinam, breeding records involve only collected speci-

mens of young birds (Haverschmidt 1968, *Birds of Surinam*, Edinburgh-London, England, Oliver and Boyd, p. 267). Nest and eggs of this species have been reported once in Guyana by Willis (1972, *Auk* 89: 192). Recently, Willis has completed a 1-yr study of its behavior at Manaus, Brazil without finding other nests (pers. comm.).

I report here the first nest found in Surinam, the second for this species. It was discovered on 19 April 1979, when, in the company of a group of Dutch ornithologists, I flushed an incubating White-plumed Antbird from a nest and two eggs in the forest understory halfway along the main trail, which is 5.5 km long and leads from Foengoe-eiland to Voltzberg (about 4°41'N, 56°12'W) in the Raleighvallen-Voltzberg Nature Reserve (managed by the Foundation for Nature Preservation in Surinam, STINASU).

The nest was sunk into a mat of dead leaves in the low crown of a 2.5-m spiny palm (*Bactris* sp.) and was about 40 cm above the ground. The nest cup was sunk deeper into the dead leaves entangled among the stalks than was the nest found by Willis (1972, *Auk* 89: 192; Fig. 1). The entrance was not perpendicular above the sitting bird but faced slightly obliquely upward in the direction of the stalks. The outer part of the nest consisted entirely of dead leaves, with an inner lining of dark-colored fibrous rootlets.

On two visits the next day I found a bird (perhaps a different one each time) incubating. Once, one was sitting with its white-plumed head towards the outside of the palm base, the next time to the inside. Both times, the bird stayed in the nest when I passed by but flushed when I halted nearby. It remained in the nearby undergrowth, giving repeated "churr" calls.

The clutch of two eggs, as is usual in antbirds (Skutch 1969, *Life histories of Central American birds*, 3, Pacific Coast Avifauna, No. 35, p. 290), was slightly incubated, and the eggs measured 20.2×16.8 and 21.2×15.8 mm. The ground color was rosy white, covered with longitudinally oblong rosy brown flecks that were thicker at the blunt end, with sparse rosy hairline undermarkings all over.

This nesting occurred during the transitional period between the short dry and short rainy season in Surinam. From field observations and museum material of juveniles, Willis (1972, *Auk* 89: 192; MS) has found that White-plumed Antbirds nest in both wet and dry seasons, at all months of the year.

The similar structure and site of the two nestings now recorded suggest that nests are normally of this type. Willis (MS) has seen males prospecting nest sites in leafy debris in the bases of similar spiny palms.

In the field I enjoyed the companionship of a group of Dutch ornithologists, including Dr. A. L. Spaans (Research Institute for Nature Management, Arnhem, Holland). I thank the staff of STINASU for their cooperation and hospitality in Surinam. I also appreciate correspondence with and critical comments on an earlier draft of these notes from B. Thomas, J. Bull, L. F. Kiff, M. P. Walters, M. D. Williams, and E. O. Willis.

Received 28 August 1979, accepted 20 November 1979.