THE NESTING OF THE RIDGWAY TYRANNULET IN SURINAM

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According to Hellmayr (1927), the Ridgway Tyrannulet (*Camptostoma obsoletum napaeum*) is confined to the Guianas, the island of Trinidad, Venezuela (except the northwestern section), Eastern Colombia, and northern Brazil. The range of the species, of which a number of races have been described, extends from Costa Rica southward over South America to Bolivia, southeastern Brazil, and northern Argentina. In the coastal region of Surinam, birds of the race *napaeum* are rather common in light forests and perhaps even commoner about coffee plantations and gardens with scattered bushes and trees.

Camptostoma obsoletum is a small tyrannid flycatcher, the weights of specimens collected by me in Surinam being: 3 males, 8, 9.4, and 9.5 grams: 3 females, 10.6, 11.4, and 9.8 grams. The general color above is olive, the crown being darker than the back and inclining to dusky brown. The throat is pale gray and the breast, abdomen, and under tail-coverts are sulphur-yellow. The bird has two yellowish wing-bars and a whitish stripe over the eye. The coloration of the sexes is similar.

Although Euler (1900) and Snethlage (1935) gave good descriptions of nests of *Camptostoma obsoletum* from Brazil, the Penard brothers (1910) and Belcher and Smooker (1937) failed to do so. The Penards in fact gave no description of the nest but, instead, referred the reader to another species, *Phaeomyias murina,* which makes an open nest of the *Elaenia* type. Belcher and Smooker described a nest from Trinidad as "a shallow cup, made of grass stems, fibres and small pieces of bark, and lined with plant down, externally . . . decorated with lichens fastened on with spider's web." This was certainly the nest of another species, probably *Phaeomyias murina,* for *Camptostoma obsoletum* builds a domed nest with a side entrance, as ably described by both Euler and Snethlage (*op. cit.*), and as borne out by my own more recent findings. I had suspected that the nest would prove to be of this type, as the nest of a closely related species, *Camptostoma imberbe,* is well known and is also domed with a side entrance (Bent, 1942).

In Paramaribo, Surinam, I found three nests of *Camptostoma obsoletum,* as follows: Nest A, on October 19, 1949, was a little ball of small dead leaves and fibers with a side entrance (fig. 1), the lining being white plant wool and fibers. It was built among creepers and was very well concealed against the dead stump of a coffee tree in my garden. Nest building was still in progress at that time. Nest B, on December 17, 1949, was situated at a height of about two meters in a Japonica in my garden. It was of exactly the same construction as nest A. It contained two incubated eggs. This was apparently the second nest of the birds from nest A, which was robbed of its single egg on November 2. The distance between the two nests was only about 15 meters. Nest C, found on September 27, 1953, was especially worthy of note in that it was fastened to the lower part of an old nest of *Tolmomyias* (almost certainly *T. flaviventris*, the commonest flatbill in this region), about two meters above ground in a coffee tree. Each nest had the shape of a lengthened ball with the side entrance near its upper end. In figure 1 the difference in the materials of the two nests may be seen; in the upper nest of *Tolmomyias* these consisted of fine dead grass stems and fibers, and in the lowert nest of *Camptostoma* they were mainly of small dead leaves. The entrance of the upper nest was on the side opposite that of the lower one and hence is not visible in figure 1. As is usual in the genus *Tolmomyias* (at least in the species *flaviventris, sulphurescens,* and *poliocephalus*), this structure had been built near a nest of wasps, which, like the *Tol-*

momyias nest, was deserted at the time of finding. Nest C contained two incubated eggs.

At nest A, I watched the building for some time. Only the female took part in construction; the male often sat and sang in a shrub nearby while she was working. On October 19 the female arrived 15 times with nest material when watched from 1:15 until 1:47 p.m. On October 20 the outer part of the nest was finished and the lining of its inner part took place. From 12 until 12:30 p.m. the female brought pieces of white plant wool to the nest seven times. This continued on October 21 when from 6:30 until

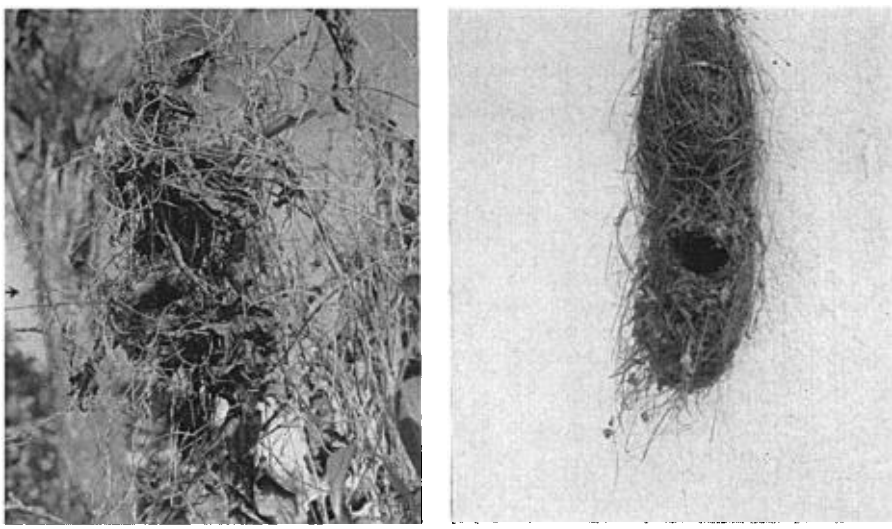

Fig. 1. Nests of *Camptostoma obsoletum*, Paramaribo, Surinam: Nest A (on left) was built among creepers, whereas nest C (on right) was fastened to the lower part of an old nest of *Tolmomyias*.

7 a.m. the female came six times and from 11:39 a.m. until 12:39 a.m., nine times. On October 22 the nest seemed ready for eggs, but the birds were not again seen in its neighborhood until the 25th, when one briefly visited the nest.

On October 26 the first and only egg was laid in nest A. Incubation was noted on the 30th, but on November 2 the nest was empty. The eggs of *Camptostoma obsoletum*, as observed in Surinam, are creamy white with a number of lilac and reddish brown spots especially at the larger end. The measurements of four eggs are: 16.4×12.3 millimeters (nest A); 16.2×12.8, 16.6×12.5 (nest B); and 16.7×12.3 (nest C; one egg broken). The weight of one fresh, unblown egg was 1.35 grams. From these records it seems that the clutch of *Camptostoma obsoletum* consists of one or two eggs, which is characteristic of most of the tyrant flycatchers of this region.

As to the breeding season, these records show that *Camptostoma* breeds in the long dry season (nests A and C) from about mid-August until mid-November, and also in the following short rainy season (nest B) from mid-November until mid-February. Whether the breeding season is more extended, I cannot say at present, and further observations must be awaited. Hellebrekers (1942) mentions a set of two eggs in the Penard collection taken in May, which is in the long rainy season. Because the Penards' description of the nest of *Camptostoma* is incorrect, as previously stated, and because the eggs are described by Hellebrekers as being white without spots, it is better that this record be dismissed.

I have no records of the incubation period, as nest A was robbed a few days after laying, while in nest B incubation was already well in progress. In nests A and B only one bird incubated, probably the female, and nest relief was never seen. On December 22 the two eggs in nest B hatched.

The nestlings were covered with whitish down. Both sexes shared in the feeding of the nestlings and the removal of feces. On December 23, when I watched the nest from 1:15 until 2:15 p.m., the nestlings were fed six times; on the 24th, from 1:05 until 2:05 p.m., three times; on the 28th, from 1:45 until 2:45 p.m., four times; and on December 30, from 1:17 until 2:17, four times. On this last day a hummingbird (*Amazilia fimbriata*), which was constructing a nest nearby, repeatedly pilfered bits of wool from the inner lining of the tyrannulet's nest. The nest was thus destroyed and the nestlings disappeared, as I have described elsewhere (Haverschmidt, 1952).

SUMMARY

1. In *Camptostoma obsoletum*, a tyrannid, the nest is domed with a side entrance and consists of dead leaves and fibers; one nest was found fastened to the lower side of a disused nest of a species of *Tolmomyias*.

2. A nest was built by the female alone, while the male sang nearby.

3. Nests with eggs were found in Surinam in September, October, and December, in both the long dry season and the short rainy season.

4. The clutch consisted of one or two eggs and only one bird, probably the female, incubated.

5. The nestlings were fed by both sexes; two nestlings, as observed when one to eight days old, were fed from three to six times per hour.

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