

THE CONDOR

VOLUME 59

SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER, 1957

NUMBER 5

THE THREE-WATTLED BELLBIRD

By DON R. ECKELBERRY

The Three-wattled Bellbird (*Procnias tricarunculata*) I have met but once, on Alexander Skutch's finca "Los Cusingos" near San Isidro del General in Costa Rica. The painting (frontispiece) which shows this bird beginning its song is based on sketches made on April 11, 1956, shortly after sunrise, when we located the bird in a guava tree near the edge of primary forest. Had Skutch not promptly identified its loud and far-carrying call, I am by no means sure I would have ascribed it to a bird.

In singing stance the body is not very upright nor is the head thrust back. But the lower mandible at maximum gape is opened so wide that it looks positively unhinged, and it nearly touches the breast. With the bill fully open, the bird emits a loud frog-like croak or grunt, which is quite rasping at close range. The bill remains wide open for perhaps two seconds whereupon a shorter gulping sound, less loud and with less resonance and carrying power, is delivered and the bill is closed. During the performance the bird looks like it is gagging. Neither of the two notes sound in the least like a bell.

It was interesting that the wattles hung down, which leads me to question the illustrations, some quite recent, which show them erect and extended. I noted also, when finally the bird flew into the forest, that its flight was strong and direct. It is in such forest, which is its typical habitat, that I have shown it in the painting.

Female Three-wattled Bellbirds are plain olive green above and striped olive green and yellowish below, and they lack wattles. Young males at first resemble females; as they mature there is a gradual transition to adult plumage and a slow development of the wattles.

These bellbirds have a distinct vertical migration from the lowlands where they "winter" to the high cloud forests where they breed. Their usual passage time at the 2500-foot elevation at "Los Cusingos" is from January to March and again from June to August, although Skutch has recorded them at this locality in every month but November. They seem always to travel singly.

The species ranges from Nicaragua to western Panamá in Central America and is the only representative of a genus which otherwise occurs in South America, where three species are known.

Babylon, Long Island, New York, June 11, 1957.