

CALLS OF THE GREAT POTOO

PAUL SLUD

Potoos "are so strictly nocturnal in their activities that their presence is known mainly through their strange calls" (Wetmore 1968:193). At "La Selva," a field station situated near the town of Puerto Viejo, Costa Rica, I heard the Great Potoo (*Nyctibius grandis*) a number of times between 28 January and 10 March 1978. Further, it became apparent, as suggested to me by George B. Reynard (pers. comm.), that it was the voice of *N. grandis* and not *N. griseus* (Common Potoo) I had previously described (Slud 1964:135).

These conclusions are based on recordings in the Library of Natural Sounds, Laboratory of Ornithology, Cornell University, of *grandis* and *griseus* made by Paul Schwartz in Venezuela and of *griseus* and *jamaicensis* made by L. Irby Davis in Middle America. Judged by all the recordings of *griseus* that I have heard, the only type of cry which this species is definitely known to utter is its unmistakable, descending *poor-me-one* call. It bears no resemblance to the *grandis*-like sounds given by the largely, if not entirely, allopatric *jamaicensis* of northern Middle America and the Greater Antilles.

At "La Selva" in 1978, one of the sounds given by the Great Potoo was a tiger-heron-like or frog-like, heavy *baaaaao*. A virtual duplicate of the cry recorded repeatedly by Schwartz in Venezuela, it corresponds to the growling *ahrr* of Eisenmann (in Ridgely 1976:142), the loud hoarse *baahoo* or *baaaaaaaaaoo* of Davis (1972:64, 1978:6), the "very harsh, deep, and long *kwak* or *kaw* or *gaw-ar*" of Sick (1953:203), and the "harsh, uncouth grating sound, *wah-h-h oo-oo-oo*, strangely guttural," of Wetmore (1968:190).

The other sound was an eerie *whoop*, more clearly enunciated and easier to transcribe than its counterparts on Schwartz's tapes. To my ear the latter range from a hoarse *oowóh* or *uh-whúh* to a burred *w-whoop* ending with or without the "p." Schwartz recorded the *whoop* cry much less frequently than the *baaaa*. At "La Selva," the *whoop* was by far the commoner utterance during my stay in 1978, and it was given by the bird apparently both at rest and in flight.

The cries I had described previously (Slud 1964:135) as an arresting, loud *wow*, *oo-wów*, *oo-wów* and a childlike *ugh*, *gwówer* with the quality of a guan (*Pelanelope*) or a Laughing Falcon (*Herpetotheres cachinans*) correspond to the hoarser *uh gwah* and *oo whah* on one of Schwartz's tapes (*Nyctibius grandis*, cut 2,

part 3). Regrettably, these sounds, which I heard at "La Selva" and attributed erroneously to a Common Potoo were cited in good faith for that species in the Petén by Smithe (1966:87). The Common Potoo does occur, however, at "La Selva," where I saw one (Slud 1960:94), and the *poor-me-one* call was recorded on tape by Stephen T. Harty in 1973 (George B. Reynard, pers. comm.).

Also appearing on Schwartz's tapes of *N. grandis* are a vibratory *irrrr* or *rirrrr*, suggestive of a cat's pleasure growl, an owl-like *óo-rroo*, either alone or following the *baaaa*, that corresponds to the *oorr* and *oorroo* heard by Haverschmidt (1948), and, apparently, clicking sounds.

Evidently the Great Potoo also occurs in the rain-forested southwest Pacific lowlands of Costa Rica. There, beside the field station at Rincón de Osa in 1969, Dennis R. Paulson (pers. comm.) heard on many occasions what he considered to be probably this species uttering a very frog-like cry from high in the forest and flying from tree to tree. Finally a report of the Great Potoo in Costa Rica by Davis (1978:7) cannot be verified. Mr. Davis has informed me that the notes containing this record have been lost.

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Department of Vertebrate Zoology, National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. 20560. Accepted for publication 21 May 1979.