

SHORT COMMUNICATIONS

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NOTES ON THE DISTRIBUTION AND STATUS OF CERTAIN BIRDS IN COSTA RICA¹

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Fieldwork over the last several years has produced many advances in our knowledge of Costa Rican birds. In this note I summarize recent additions to the country's avifauna, and one major change of status, that are based upon specimens or photographic data. New sight records and much new information on distribution within Costa Rica will be presented elsewhere (Stiles and Skutch, in press). All specimens referred to here are in the collection of the Museo de Zoología, Universidad de Costa Rica (UCR collection number given).

GRAY-BREASTED CRAKE (*LATERALLUS EXILIS*)

The first Costa Rican specimen of this elusive but not uncommon rail was taken by D. Levey and me, with the enthusiastic assistance of E. Brennan and M. Ed-dison, on 23 February 1983, in a wet pasture across the Río Puerto Viejo from the La Selva Biological Station, Provincia de Heredia. The specimen (UCR 2685) is an adult female with ovaries slightly enlarged. Further details, including vocalizations, previous sightings, and local distribution, will be presented elsewhere.

WATTLED JACANA (*JACANA JACANA*)

With help from M. Marín, I took the first Costa Rican specimen on 11 July 1984 at Laural, Prov. Puntarenas, ca. 3 km west of the Panamanian border. The bird (UCR 2880), an adult male with greatly enlarged testes, was behaving very aggressively towards the numerous Northern Jacanas (*J. spinosa*) present with it in a flooded but drying rice field. It shows no sign of hybridization or introgression with the latter species, such as has been reported in western Panama, evidently in association with a westward range expansion (cf. Ridgely 1981).

KILLDEER (*CHARADRIUS VOCIFERUS*)

Well known in Costa Rica as a migrant and winter resident (Slud 1964), the Killdeer also appears to be a permanent resident in small numbers in the Cartago area, and perhaps elsewhere in the central highlands. Having observed Killdeers in June and July in several years at Las Cónavas, 5 km southeast of Cartago, J. E. Sánchez and I began to seek evidence of breeding. On 28 June 1984, at a newly-dug farm pond at Las Cónavas, an adult gave vigorous distraction displays to us. After searching the flat, muddy shore for over 30 min, we found and collected a downy chick (UCR 2689); not over a day or two old, it still had yolk in its stomach. We withdrew some 50 m, and eventually the adult landed, called two more chicks out of the grass nearby, and led them away. We found egg fragments and a probable nest scrape, but no other eggs or chicks in the vicinity, suggesting that the original clutch was three eggs. In June 1985, Sánchez noted a brood of three being attended by two adults at this pond; and on 5 July 1986, L. Rosselli and I found a single downy chick at another pond nearby. I have seen adults giving similar distraction displays at this time of year at Coris and Laguna Doña Ana, also in the Cartago area, but not in the lowlands of either slope, where the species appears to be exclusively a winter resident, and in much greater numbers. The status of the Killdeer in Costa Rica is thus precisely the same as that of the Mourning Dove (*Zenaida macroura*) (cf. Slud 1964; Stiles and Skutch, in press). This is the first reported breeding of the Killdeer in Central America.

CURLEW SANDPIPER (*CALIDRIS FERRUGINEA*)

On 7 November 1984, while mist-nesting shorebirds with J. E. Sánchez, R. Fyfe, and U. Banasch at Salina Bonilla, 1.5 km southeast Colorado, Prov. Guanacaste, I captured an adult female of this species in a flock of Western (*C. mauri*) and Semipalmated (*C. pusilla*) sandpipers. The specimen (UCR 3048) is in full basic body plumage, and is molting the primaries. This is the first record of this species for Central America; however, it is an increasingly regular winter visitor

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along the Atlantic coast of North America (AOU 1983), and occasional individuals should not be unexpected further south.

SOOTY TERN (*STERNA FUSCATA*)

This species has been known from Costa Rican waters on the basis of several sight reports (Slud 1964), but the first specimen record for the country is a young bird picked up by G. Hartshorn beside the Rio Sarapiquí at the La Selva Biological Station on 2 April 1983. The specimen (UCR 2691) is in full juvenile plumage; weak and emaciated, it died soon after being picked up.

POMARINE JAEGER
(*STERCORARIUS POMARINUS*)

This species was also known from Costa Rican waters from several sight records; with E. Wimmer, I took the first specimen for the country (UCR 2716), a fat immature male, off Caldera in the eastern Golfo de Nicoya on 11 June 1983, after it landed near our boat during chumming operations. Interestingly, a second specimen (UCR 3321) is a subadult female picked up in a moribund state by J. Alvarado and O. Paniagua near Chilamate de Sarapiquí, Prov. Heredia, on 31 March 1986. Like the Sooty Tern above, this bird was weak and emaciated, and died soon after being picked up; both were probably storm-driven waifs.

OILBIRD (*STEATORNIS CARIPENSIS*)

In late January 1986, P. Pyle and S. G. Howell found the desiccated, partial remains of an Oilbird beneath a power line ca. 100 m from the Pan American Highway at Villa Mills, Prov. Cartago, at 3,100 m elevation on the north end of the Cordillera de Talamanca. When told of their find S. Perkins, realizing its importance, collected the remains and brought them to me. The specimen (UCR 3507) consists of most of the left wing and assorted other feathers, unmistakably those of an Oilbird from the size and the distinctive white spotting on the wing coverts; the dark color of the primaries may indicate a young bird (cf. Wetmore 1968). It may be surmised that a wandering bird collided with the power line while crossing the mountains at night, possibly confused by the bright lights of a nearby restaurant—the only such lights in a wide radius, as the surrounding area is heavily forested except for a narrow strip of clearings and scrub along the highway. Young Oilbirds in particular are noted for their wandering propensities; this is the first report for Costa Rica, and by far the northernmost for the species, whose nearest breeding caves are probably in east Darién or adjacent Colombia (Wetmore 1968).

OCELLATED POORWILL
(*NYCTIPHRYNUS OCELLATUS*)

On the moonlit evening of 28 March 1988, in an area of dense, tall second growth adjacent to forest ca. 4 km south-southeast of Brasilia, Prov. Alajuela, I heard a nightjar call I could not identify. Returning the next evening, I succeeded in obtaining tape recordings and a specimen (UCR 3580), an adult male with enlarged testes. The only previous record for Central America is a single adult female specimen collected at Peña Blanca, in northeast Nicaragua, on 5 June 1909 by W.

B. Richardson, and described as a new species, *N. lautus*, by Miller and Griscom (1925). The Costa Rican specimen agrees well with *lautus* in size (wing chord 117.7 mm, tail length 98.2 mm), but is more blackish, less rufescent in overall coloration. This may not be significant, however, as females are more rufescent than males in other species of the genus, as currently recognized (Ridgway 1914, cf. AOU 1983). There is also much variation, from rufous to blackish, in South American populations of *ocellatus* (Hilty and Brown 1986). Therefore, I am confident in assigning my specimen to *lautus*, of which it is the first known male. The fact that my bird was in breeding condition indicates that there is a distinct Central American population (although this does not exclude the possibility that these birds might migrate to South America during the non-breeding season). My collecting locality is ca. 15 km south of the Nicaraguan boundary, and the Brasilia area has been largely deforested only in the last 10–15 years, suggesting that the presence of *N. ocellatus* in Costa Rica may represent a recent range extension.

PRAIRIE WARBLER (*DENDROICA DISCOLOR*)

The first Costa Rican specimen of this rare migrant is an immature female that I collected (UCR 3166) in scrubby second growth 0.5 km northeast of Ciudad Universitaria, Prov. San Jose, on 31 August 1985. First seen on 29 August as it deliberately worked through tall shrubs gleaning insects, the bird was mostly silent and not associated with any other birds. The species was previously known in Costa Rica from two sightings (Stiles and Smith 1980).

PALM WARBLER (*DENDROICA PALMARUM*)

I took the first Costa Rican specimen of this migrant at Playuelas, Prov. Alajuela, near the Nicaraguan border, on 15 October 1982. The bird (UCR 2627), an immature female, was with a feeding flock of other migrant warblers and resident species, along a roadside in low, wet scrub. In addition, L. Rosselli and I saw six or seven and banded two Palm Warblers in open grassy areas along the Caribbean coast between Puerto Viejo and Manzanillo, Prov. Limón, during stormy weather between 5 and 8 November 1985. All birds seen or handled to date have been representative of the nominate race.

MELODIOUS BLACKBIRD (*DIVES DIVES*)

The only Costa Rican record to date is a bird seen and photographed by S. G. Howell 5.1 km northeast of Puente Lagartos, along the road to Monteverde, Prov. Puntarenas, on 17 March 1987. The bird was associating with a group of Groove-billed Anis (*Crotophaga sulcirostris*), in trees along the edge of a pasture. The photographs show the bird to be about the same bulk as the anis, its eye and bill are dark, the bill is more slender and sharp-pointed than that of a cowbird, the bird shows no sign of a neck ruff, and its tail is of medium length, without a keel. In one photo a slight bluish gloss is apparent on the entirely black plumage. The combination of these features eliminates any other species of blackbird or cowbird; in addition, Howell was familiar with *Dives* from Mexico, and recognized

it immediately (Howell, pers. comm.). The occurrence of this species in Costa Rica is to be expected, as it has been expanding its range in Nicaragua in recent years; it is now known they are south at least to Rivas, just north of the Costa Rican boundary (J. C. Martínez, pers. comm.).

LINCOLN'S SPARROW
(*MELOSPIZA LINCOLNI*)

I collected an immature female of this species in a brushy field 0.5 km northeast of Ciudad Universitaria, Prov. San Jose, on 16 November 1985. The specimen (UCR 3238), in fresh plumage with very light fat, is the first for Costa Rica following several sight reports (Tramer 1979, Stiles and Smith 1980). In addition, G. Barrantes, A. Pereira, and I banded and released an adult Lincoln's Sparrow at the same site on 25 November 1985.

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FEMALE PAIRING: A REPRODUCTIVE STRATEGY FOR HERRING GULLS?¹

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Adaptive and nonadaptive explanations have been provided for the phenomenon of female pairing in gulls (Hunt and Hunt 1977, Coulson and Thomas 1985). In this paper we summarize data for Herring Gull (*Larus argentatus*) female pairs that pertain to these interpretations.

METHODS

Populations of color-banded individuals at three Great Lakes island colonies were used for this study during 1978 to 1986 (Table 1). Female pairs were identified by capturing supernormal clutch attendants and by locating females that we had color-banded in previous years. We confirmed that the supernormal clutches under study were attended by female pairs and not by one male-multiple female groups (Fitch and Shugart 1983, Fox and Boersma 1983) by observations of nest attendants. At Lake Michigan colonies (see Shugart et al. 1987 for locations), after banding, observations were done for a dawn to dusk period then periodically through the breeding season (see Shugart 1980, Shugart et al. 1987). At Lake Ontario, attendants were observed during nest checks.

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