

lemetry was apparently more disturbance than the birds could handle.

The Least Tern is at best a marginal subject for telemetry because of its small size, adverse reactions to all but minimal handling, and need for streamlined flight. Common Terns, which are larger and more amenable to handling, should be better suited to the method. However, a pilot study on the Common Tern in Massachusetts in 1987 encountered similar problems. Transmitters were glued to the rectrices of five pairs of breeding birds, following which two pairs deserted their nests. The method of attachment was unsuccessful; all terns lost the transmitters within a few days (J. L. Atwood, pers. comm.).

Our experiences in 1987 have caused us to abandon radiotelemetry on the Least Tern. Further miniaturization of transmitters and internalization of antennas may in future make the method more useful, but at present caution is in order. For Least Terns the only marking technique that has proven tolerable is leg bands.

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FIRST DESCRIPTION OF THE NEST AND EGGS OF THE MOSS-BACKED TANAGER (*BUTHRAUPIS [BANGSIA] EDWARDSI*)¹

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Key words: *Buthraupis edwardsi*; nest; eggs; Ecuador.

While making an avifaunal survey in wet, foothill forest at El Placer, Prov. Esmeraldas, Ecuador (0°52'N, 78°33'W), we discovered a nest with two eggs of the Moss-backed Tanager (*Buthraupis [Bangsia] ed-*

wardsi). This apparently represents the first published description of the nest and eggs of this species, since a recently published book summarizing tanager biology (Isler and Isler, *The Tanagers: natural history, distribution, and identification*. Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington, DC, 1987) gives no information on its breeding biology.

The nest was discovered on 30 July 1987, along the crest of a ridge in wet, relatively undisturbed foothill forest at ca. 670 m. However, the contents and the identity of the owner were not positively established

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until the following day, when an adult was flushed from the nest and reappeared less than 5 min later. The nest, an open cup, was placed at the junction of two relatively small, moss-covered branches near the base of an understory tree, just over 2 m above the ground. Canopy height in the nest-site area was ca. 20 m. With the exception of the inner lining, the nest was comprised of fresh material. The bulk of the nest was composed of at least three fern species (one of the genus *Dryopteris*) and moss. The inner lining consisted of a thin, wiry vine with alternate, distichous leaves (most of the vine was devoid of leaves; photos in VIREO VO6/4/001-002). The diameter and depth of the cup's interior was 65 mm and 30 mm, respectively. The subelliptically shaped eggs (ANSP #180154; 26.5 × 18.2 mm; 25.5 × 18.8 mm) are white and nonglossy. Both are finely speckled in red or brownish-red at the smaller end, with the spotting becoming heavier and blotched, terminating in a dense ring at the larger end.

This discovery unfortunately cannot shed any light on the controversy surrounding the systematic limits of the genus *Buthraupis* (composed of two distinct groups; the larger-sized, temperate zone *Buthraupis*,

and the smaller, lower montane "*Bangsia*"; see Isler and Isler 1987), since the eggs are unknown for all other members of this complex, and the nest is described only for another *Bangsia*, the Blue-and-gold Tanager (*Buthraupis* [*Bangsia*] *arcaei*). The nest of *edwardsi* differs in two respects from that of the two described nests of *arcaei* (neither were collected nor examined in the hand). Both *arcaei* nests were stated to be enclosed with a moss dome and located somewhat higher (10–12 m) above the ground than the *edwardsi* nest (R. S. Ridgely, in litt., and B. Whitney, in litt., in Isler and Isler 1987).

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OBSERVATIONS ON THE NESTING OF THE GREAT POTOO (*NYCTIBIUS GRANDIS*) IN CENTRAL VENEZUELA¹

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Key words: Great Potoo; *Nyctibius grandis*; *Nyctibiidae*; nesting; fledging period; Venezuela.

The nesting and behavior of the Great Potoo (*Nyctibius grandis*) are largely unknown because of its cryptic appearance and nocturnal habits. The Great Potoo is most often observed during the day when it is chanced upon as it sits motionless on a regular daytime perch (Haverschmidt 1948, Perry 1979), relying on its mottled plumage and elongate shape for concealment (Wetmore 1968). It is only rarely observed at night, when it is usually first detected by its guttural calls (Slud 1979). The Great Potoo also habitually uses hunting perches at night, from which it flies out to catch prey (Haverschmidt 1948). The breeding biology of the Great Potoo is virtually unknown. To the best of my knowledge, the only published accounts of the nesting of this species are descriptions of nests, eggs, and nestlings (Haverschmidt 1948, 1968; Sick 1951; Wetmore 1968),

many of which were destroyed by collecting. The only detailed studies done on any species in the family were conducted on the Common Potoo (*N. griseus*) by Skutch (1970) and Alvarez del Toro (1971).

The following is a report on observations I made on the nesting of the Great Potoo in a gallery forest on the Guárico River in the llanos of Guárico state, Venezuela.

On 9 June 1987, I saw an adult Great Potoo perched approximately 12 m above the ground on a branch of a large tree. It was in exactly the same place as I had observed an almost fully grown juvenile Great Potoo from 12–22 August 1986. The branch was about 30 cm thick and sloped up at an angle of approximately 20°, but the part of the branch used by the bird was relatively flat and slightly wider than the rest of the branch. The bird habitually perched with the long axis of its body at a small angle with the branch. While perched, the bird's head faced the ascending side of the branch, and its long tail hung down slightly below the branch. The only movements the bird made were to occasionally turn its head from side to side. Otherwise it remained motionless, and I was able to examine it closely with binoculars and a telescope. When alarmed, it would stretch itself lengthwise and point its head

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