

PLAIN WREN DESTROYS EGG OF DUSKY ANTIBIRD

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Abstract.—A Plain Wren was observed to pierce one of two eggs in the nest of a Dusky Antbird in Gamboa, Panama Province, Republic of Panama. This is the first report of egg destruction by a tropical wren species.

DESTRUCCIÓN DE UN HUEVO DE *CERCOMACRA TYRANNINA* POR *THRYOTHORUS MODESTUS*

Sinopsis.—Un individuo de *Thryothorus modestus* fue observado perforando uno de dos huevos de un nido de *Cercomacra tyrannina* en Gamboa, Provincia Panama, República de Panama. Éste es el primer reporte de la destrucción de un huevo de otra especie por un Troglodytidae tropical.

Interspecific egg destruction by a number of wren species has been documented in temperate habitats (Anderson and Anderson 1973, Belles-Isles and Picman 1986, Picman 1977). Although no egg destruction has been reported for tropical wren species, Freed (1987) has reported infanticide by Rufous-and-white Wrens (*Thryothorus rufalbis*) on tropical House Wrens (*Troglodytes aedon*). These behaviors have been interpreted as acts of interference competition between species with overlapping resource requirements (Belles-Isles and Picman 1986, Freed 1987, Picman 1980). We report here an observation of destruction of an egg of a Dusky Antbird (*Cercomacra tyrannina*) by a Plain Wren (*Thryothorus modestus*) in Panama.

Our observation was made while searching for nests during a larger study on the breeding biology and mating system of the Dusky Antbird. On 30 May 1993 we discovered a Dusky Antbird nest containing two intact eggs in an area of second-growth forest adjacent to Morrow Boulevard in Gamboa, Panama Province, Republic of Panama. The nest was built on the edge of the vegetation facing a clearing; the 15 nests found previously were surrounded by dense vegetation or located in the forest interior. We decided to observe the nest and identify the attending species because the nest was in an unusual site.

Within 2 min of beginning our observation, a Plain Wren was seen making its way through tall grass toward the nest. Upon reaching the nest, the wren thrust its head into the nest entrance three times. Following its second thrust we noted a glistening substance and egg shell on its bill. After the third thrust a female Dusky Antbird flew in rapidly and displaced the Plain Wren from the nest. The female gave loud "churr" notes while attacking, and drove the wren to the ground. We went back to the nest and discovered one egg with a small hole. The other egg was undamaged.

We made an additional observation in the Gamboa area that provides

circumstantial evidence of Dusky Antbird egg destruction by wrens. On 27 May 1993 we discovered a Dusky Antbird nest containing two eggs in second-growth forest near the start of Pipeline Road in Gamboa. When we returned 2 d later, two Black-bellied Wrens (*Thryothorus fasciatus*) were observed carrying nesting material within 2 m of the Dusky Antbird nest. The two eggs were missing from the Dusky Antbird nest. The following day, the pair of Dusky Antbirds was observed building a new nest at least 50 m from the old nest.

Our direct and inferred observations of Dusky Antbird egg destruction by two species of wrens are the first reported for tropical wrens. We suppose that the wrens view the Dusky Antbird, a species that forages for insects in second growth habitats, as a potential competitor for food. Unlike Freed (1987) we have no evidence suggesting that the period of our observations was one of low resource abundance, in spite of it apparently being an El Niño year (N. Smith, pers. comm.; pers. obs.). We did not observe the Plain Wren removing eggs as reported for Marsh Wrens (*Cistothorus palustris*; Picman 1977) and House Wrens (Belles-Isles and Picman 1986). The rapid return of the female may have precluded egg removal for this individual, however.

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