

AN OBSERVATION OF ATTEMPTED INTERSPECIFIC KLEPTOPARASITISM BETWEEN TWO NEOTROPICAL TYRANNID FLYCATCHERS

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Key words: Kleptoparasitism, *Megarynchus pitangua*, *Tyrannopsis sulphurea*, Trinidad.

Kleptoparasitism, the interspecific and intraspecific stealing of already procured food, is well known among many taxa of birds (Brockmann & Barnard 1979), but has been reported only rarely in the avian family Tyrannidae. To my knowledge there are only two published observations of kleptoparasitism by tyrannid flycatchers, in both cases representing intraspecific kleptoparasitism within a single species. In Trinidad, Bentley (1991) observed a Great Kiskadee (*Pitangus sulphuratus*) stealing a dead mouse from another Great Kiskadee. And in Paraguay, I reported a group of six Great Kiskadees chasing each other and exchanging a large, green orthopteran insect (Hayes 1992). In this note I report a case of interspecific kleptoparasitism in which a Sulphury Flycatcher (*Tyrannopsis sulphurea*) attempted to steal food from a Boat-billed Flycatcher (*Megarynchus pitangua*).

On 11 February 1996, I was censusing birds along a road between a Caribbean pine (*Pinus caribaea*) plantation and native “marsh forest” (habitat described by Beard 1944) at

Aripo Savannas, Cumuto, Trinidad. At about 08:10 h, I observed (through 7 x 35 binoculars) a Boat-billed Flycatcher perched in a tree about 25 m away with a large, unidentified butterfly in its bill. During the next 5 min, while the Boat-billed Flycatcher tried to eat the butterfly, a Sulphury Flycatcher hopped about the branches nearby, maintaining a distance of about 2 m from the Boat-billed Flycatcher, and on six occasions lunged toward the Boat-billed Flycatcher in unsuccessful attempts at procuring the butterfly. During these kleptoparasitic attacks the Boat-billed Flycatcher generally faced away from the Sulphury Flycatcher and dodged it by hopping away along the same branch or onto another branch; on no occasion was physical contact made between the two birds. After the Boat-billed Flycatcher consumed the butterfly at about 08:15 h, both flycatchers left the tree in different directions.

In my earlier note (Hayes 1992) I had predicted that kleptoparasitism was more likely to be practiced by the larger, open country

species of flycatchers because in an “open” habitat, potential hosts can be watched at a longer distance, it is more difficult to hide from kleptoparasites, the capture and carrying of prey is more visible, and items can be found more easily after they are relinquished by the host (Paulson 1986). The Great Kiskadee and the Sulphury Flycatcher are both large, noisy and relatively conspicuous flycatchers of relatively open country, the latter being particularly fond of *Mauritia* palm savannas (French 1991, Ridgely & Tudor 1994).

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Accepted 26 May 1997.