

Faunistics

ORNITOLOGIA NEOTROPICAL 9: 225–226, 1998
 © The Neotropical Ornithological Society

A SIGHT RECORD OF THE HARPY EAGLE (*HARPIA HARPYJA*) IN CHIAPAS, MEXICO

José Eduardo Morales-Pérez

Instituto de Historia Natural, Colecciones Científicas, Apartado postal 6, Tuxtla Gutiérrez,
 Chiapas, México, C. P. 29000.

Key words. Neotropical birds, distribution, Accipitridae, *Harpia harpyja*.

I recorded a Harpy Eagle (*Harpia harpyja*) while conducting an environmental impact assessment with the Instituto de Historia Natural de Chiapas, Mexico, for construction of the highway from Sayula, Veracruz to Ocozocoautla, Chiapas. My sighting was made on 12 March 1991 about 17:00 h, at the Reserva Forestal y Fáunica “Selva El Ocote” (16°57’N, 93°42’W), at 700 m above sea level.

My sighting was made from a gap created by a coffee plantation within tropical evergreen forest. Although seen briefly, the eagle was an adult, easily identified by its prominent size, gray head with blackish crest, very broad wings and white underparts with black upper chest, and could not be confused with other raptors such as Ornate Hawk-Eagle (*Spizæetus ornatus*) or Black Hawk-Eagle (*Spizæetus tyrannus*). The bird flew quickly towards a group of spider monkeys (*Ateles geoffroyi*), in the 25–30 m. high forest canopy. The group of monkeys was carrying three young and gave extremely noisy danger cries, the eagle flew from the forest canopy through the gap and went

through the trees into the forest, below the uppermost canopy level. The sighting was made from 25–30 m. Because of the large size of the eagle, it may have been a female. Due to the topography and the vegetation obstruction, I could not make additional observations.

The Harpy Eagle is a rare resident in tropical forests of southern Mexico. It has been reported in the states of Oaxaca (Binford 1989, Escalante-Pliego & Peterson 1993), Tabasco, Veracruz, Campeche and Chiapas (Friedmann, *et al.* 1950, Blake 1977, AOU 1983), although the record from Campeche has been questioned (Howell & Webb 1995).

In Chiapas, published records are from the Sierra Madre and Selva Lacandona (Alvarez del Toro 1980, González-García 1992). This record is an extension of the former known range of the species for Chiapas, almost 300 km west of Lacandon rainforest and 150 km north of the Sierra Madre de Chiapas, and agrees with the former range showed by Howell & Webb (1995). As noted

by Escalante-Pliego & Peterson (1993), it is possible that populations of the Harpy Eagle still remain in the reserve because the forest is well preserved. This area is connected with Los Chimalapas in Oaxaca and the region of Uxpanapa in Veracruz, which together form an extensive landscape of lowland rainforest that deserves priority attention in conservation strategies.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I want to thank Steve N. G. Howell and Michael A. Patten for commenting on an earlier draft of this note.

REFERENCES

- Alvarez del Toro, M. 1980. Las Aves de Chiapas. 2nd ed. Univ. Autónoma de Chiapas, Tuxtla Gutiérrez, México.
- American Ornithologists' Union. 1983. Check-list of North American birds. 6th ed. American Ornithologists' Union, Washington, D.C.
- Binford, L. C. 1989. A distributional survey of the birds of the Mexican state of Oaxaca. Ornithol. Monogr. 43: 1–418.
- Blake, E. R. 1977. Manual of Neotropical birds. Univ. of Chicago Press, Chicago.
- Escalante-Pliego, P., & A. T. Peterson. 1993. Records of the Harpy Eagle (*Harpia harpyja*) in Oaxaca, Mexico. Euphonia 2: 95–97.
- Friedmann, H., L. Griscom, & R. T. Moore. 1950. Distributional check-list of the birds of Mexico. Part I. Pac. Coast Avif. 29: 1–202.
- González-García, F. 1992. Avifauna de la Selva Lacandona, Chiapas, Mexico. Pp. 173–200 in Vázquez-Sánchez, M. A., & M. A. Ramos (eds.). Reserva de la Biosfera Montes Azules, Selva Lacandona: Investigación para su conservación. Publ. Esp. Ecósfera 1, Centro de Estudios para la Conservación de los Recursos Naturales, A. C. San Cristóbal de Las Casas, Chiapas, México.
- Howell, S. N. G., & S. Webb. 1995. A guide to the birds of Mexico and Northern Central America. Oxford Univ. Press, New York.

Accepted 11 June 1998.