

**Notes on the nesting of the Cayenne Swift in Surinam.**—The nest of the Cayenne Swift (*Panyptila cayennensis*) is one of the most remarkable structures built by any bird in tropical South America. Although the nest has been known for some time, I am not aware of the existence of satisfactory photographs showing a nest *in situ*. The picture published by the Penard brothers (1910. "De Vogels van Guyana," Paramaribo. Vol. 2:96-97) was long a mystery to me, until I found that it not only



FIG. 1. A nest of *Panyptila cayennensis* under the eave of a roof. Photographed in Surinam on March 9, 1947, by F. Haverschmidt.

shows a nest which is cut open but that the picture is reproduced upside down! I have no detailed observations on the bird's breeding behavior because watching an occupied nest yields no result other than seeing the bird dash out of the nest to vanish altogether. Even so, it seems worthwhile to publish the data I was able to assemble.

The best description of the nest is that by Belcher and Smooker (1936. *Ibis*, 13th Ser., 6:28): "The nest is a tubular sleeve-like structure of plant down collected on the wing, often reaching a length of 2 feet. The sleeve is open at the bottom, where the bird enters and flies up to the egg-chamber, a little saucer shaped pocket some way

up at one side." I did not find corroborated by other writers the statement of these authors that each time the nest is enlarged a new nest cup is made, so that a long used nest may have as many as four cups, one above the other.

The nest is fawn colored and, when cut open and flattened, looks like a tightly woven carpet, about 8 mm. thick, of very soft, downy, plant material. Sick (1947. *Rev. Brasil Biol.*, 7:219-246) gives a detailed description of four nests from Brazil

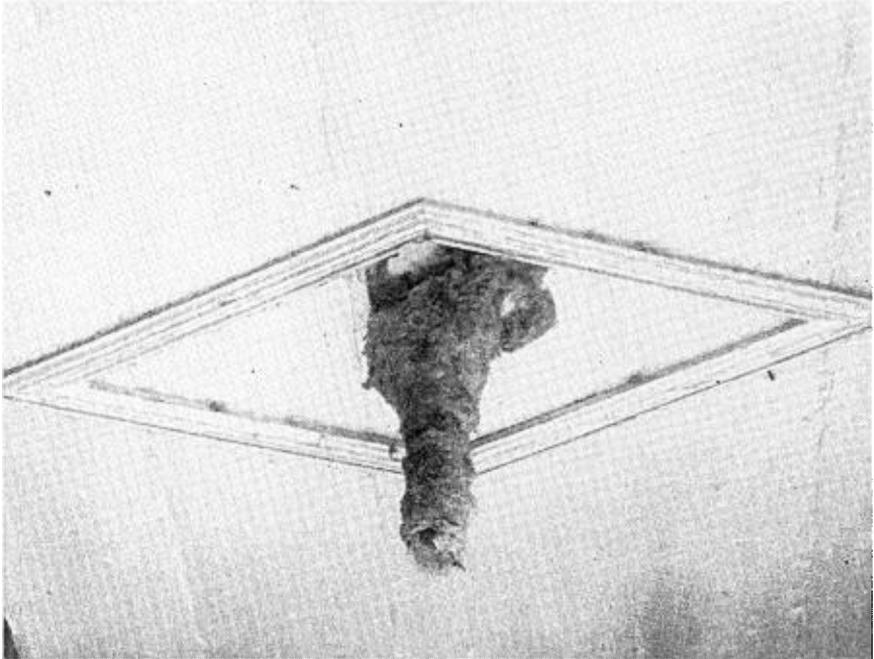


FIG. 2. A nest of *Panyptila cayennensis* hanging from the ceiling of a porch in Paramaribo, Surinam. Photographed on May 10, 1953, by F. Haverschmidt.

with measurements and a careful analysis of the plant material of which these nests were built, but he overlooked the important notes by Belcher and Smooker (*op. cit.*) and Greenway (1934. *Auk*, 51:377-379).

Sick distinguishes two general types of nests, the long, straight type and the short, kinked type.

The nests I found in Surinam were built under the eaves of the roofs of wooden buildings, on the ceiling of a porch of a building, alongside the trunk of a tree, and attached to the underside of a branch. Greenway (*op. cit.*) even mentions nests built inside buildings in the Panama Canal Zone.

Descriptions of the five nests I have found in Surinam follow:

1. March 2, 1947, nest with a very long sleeve under the eave of the roof of the hospital building at the plantation "Peperpot" along the Surinam River (fig. 1). On March 9, the bird was seen leaving the nest; it was again observed dashing out of the nest on April 11 and June 27, 1947. In 1948 the nest was enlarged and occupied

again; the bird was seen leaving the nest on May 23. In 1949 the nest was once more enlarged and inhabited; I saw a swift flying out of it on June 9. This nest was the largest of all I have seen.

2. On March 23, 1947, I found a second nest on this plantation. It was built alongside the trunk of a shade tree (*Erythrina glauca*) at a height of about 20 meters. The nest appeared old and not in use at that time.

3. On April 4, 1948, I found a nest suspended from the underside of a horizontal branch of a huge cotton tree (*Ceiba pentandra*), about midway out from the trunk, at a height of about 30 meters on the plantation "La Liberté" along the Surinam River. The bird was not seen but the nest looked new. This nest seemed remarkable to me as it was attached to the branch only at the top, while the sleeve hung free in the air.

4. On April 3, 1951, I found a nest with a long sleeve under the eave of the roof of a building on the grounds of the waterworks at Republiek. The nest was occupied at that time as the bird was seen repeatedly leaving the nest. On August 13, 1952, the nest was still there and apparently it had been used again though the bird was not seen. In this same locality on April 6, 1951, I found a different nest on the ground which had apparently been removed from its site. This nest was of the kinked type with only a short sleeve.

5. On April 9, 1953, I found a nest with a long sleeve hanging from the ceiling of a porch of a building along the Surinam River in the middle of the town of Paramaribo. It was of the same type as nest 3, as its upperside was attached to the roof and the sleeve hung freely in the air (fig. 2). Although I did not see the bird, the nest was inhabited, since on the floor under it lay some fresh excrement.

From these notes it seems clear that in Surinam the nests are occupied from March to the end of June, which is corroborated by the observations of Belcher and Smooker (1936) in Trinidad who found nests occupied usually in April. Because of the inaccessibility of the nests, I never was able to examine their contents. The nest of a near relative, *Panyptila sancti-hieronimi*, which occurs in western Guatemala and which is considered by Peters (1940. "Check-List of Birds of the World," Cambridge. Vol. 4:253-254) as a separate species but by Stresemann (1927-34, "Aves. Handbuch der Zoologie." Berlin. p. 348) as only a geographic race of *cayennensis*, is described as similar but is said to contain a "false entrance" half way up its side (Sclater 1863, quoted by Stresemann, *op. cit.*). Whether this is the rule or only an exception further observations must show.—F. HAVERSCHMIDT, P. O. Box 644, Paramaribo, Surinam, Dutch Guiana, May 18, 1953.

**Two Mallard ducks caring for the same brood.**—On July 5, 1953, a Mallard duck (*Anas platyrhynchos*) hatched a late brood of four young on Wintergreen Lake at the W. K. Kellogg Bird Sanctuary. The following day one duckling disappeared and on July 8 only two remained. However, on this date two Mallard ducks were noted for the first time to be with the young and from that time on the two ducks were seen always with the two young. Both females seemed equally concerned over the care of the young and all four birds kept in close proximity to one another. On July 10, a particularly aggressive male Mute Swan (*Cygnus olor*) was observed swimming rapidly towards the young ducklings. The two ducks were unsuccessful in their attempts to herd the ducklings away from the onrushing swan. As the swan reached out to seize one of the ducklings both of the Mallard females flew at the head of the swan. For several minutes both ducks continued their attack on the swan, beating him about the head and neck with their wings. The swan soon retreated and the Mallards returned