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## First Record of Shiny Cowbird (*Molothrus bonariensis*) in Yucatán, Mexico

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**ABSTRACT.**—Since the early 1900s, the Shiny Cowbird (*Molothrus bonariensis*) has expanded its range from northern South America through the West Indies. This spread has had detrimental effects on several species, especially endemics confined to islands. Here, I report the first record for Shiny Cowbirds in Mexico. The establishment of this species in the Yucatan Peninsula seems likely, and may pose a problem for the conservation of Yucatan endemics. *Received 18 June 1997, accepted 5 March 1998.*

The Shiny Cowbird (*Molothrus bonariensis*) has rapidly expanded its range since the turn of the century, island hopping from Trinidad and Tobago north through the Lesser Antilles, and west through the Greater Antilles (Post and Wiley 1977, Post et al. 1993). The species was first recorded in Cuba in 1982 (Garrido 1984) and in Florida in 1985 (Smith and Sprunt 1987). From the Greater Antilles, the Shiny Cowbird has been expected to invade into Florida and the Yucatan Peninsula of Mexico (Post and Wiley 1977, Howell and Webb 1995).

On 27 May 1996, I observed a single male Shiny Cowbird in an area of burned mangroves adjacent to an intact mangrove forest at the eastern edge of the town of Río Celestún, Yucatan, Mexico. Identifying field marks of the bird were a slender conical bill, uniform dull blue-black plumage, squared-off tail, and a solid dark eye. Of Yucatan resident species with which the Shiny Cowbird could be po-

tentially confused, eye color and plumage differentiated it from Bronzed Cowbird (*M. aeneus*), and the bill and tail shape separated it from Melodious Blackbird (*Dives dives*). The appearance of Shiny Cowbird in mangrove forest is not unexpected, as this seems to be the preferred lowland habitat of the species in the Antilles (Post and Wiley 1977, Post et al. 1990).

The spread of Shiny Cowbirds through the West Indies has been favored by the conversion of forested areas to early successional habitats, and by the absence of native brood parasites (Post and Wiley 1977, Cruz et al. 1995). Contact with Shiny Cowbirds has proven detrimental for some West Indian bird species, particularly the endangered Yellow-shouldered Blackbird (*Agelaius xanthomus*) and the Puerto Rican Vireo (*Vireo latimeri*; e.g., Post and Wiley 1976, Post 1981, Wiley et al. 1991, Faaborg et al. 1997). Birds that have no evolutionary experience with brood parasites may suffer high rates of parasitism and reproductive failure (Wiley 1985, Post et al. 1990, Cruz et al. 1995).

Eventual establishment of Shiny Cowbird populations in the Yucatan Peninsula seems likely, given that 25% of the region's forest has been converted to agriculture (Toledo and Ordóñez 1993). Yucatan birds may not be as vulnerable to brood parasitism as West Indian birds because of contact with the Bronzed Cowbird, which is resident throughout the Peninsula. However, experience with the Bronzed Cowbird may be limited among Yucatan birds because this species is less of a generalist parasite, specializing mostly on ic-

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terids and finches (Friedmann 1929, Oberholser 1974). Thus, the presence of two sympatric brood parasites in the Yucatan may be detrimental to more species.

During the early years of Shiny Cowbird range expansion (1920–1940), its primary hosts on Trinidad and Tobago included the House Wren (*Troglodytes aedon*) and Yellow-hooded Blackbird (*Agelaius icterocephalus*; Cruz et al. 1995). As the Shiny Cowbird has moved through the Antilles, frequent host species included vireos, *Dendroica* warblers, *Myiarchus* flycatchers, as well as *Agelaius* blackbirds (Wiley 1985, Post et al. 1990, Cruz et al. 1995).

The ability of Yucatan endemics to persist in light of potential establishment of the Shiny Cowbird is an important question. Based on host choice trends of the Shiny Cowbird, Yucatan endemics at risk include the Yucatan Flycatcher (*Myiarchus yucatanensis*), Yucatan Wren (*Campylorhynchus yucatanicus*), Orange Oriole (*Icterus auratus*), Black Catbird (*Melanoptila glabrirostris*), Cozumel Vireo (*Vireo bairdi*), and Cozumel Wren (*Troglodytes beani*; Friedmann 1929, Friedmann et al. 1977, Friedmann and Kiff 1985). Yucatan Vireo (*Vireo magister*) and White-browed Wren (*Thryothorus albinucha*) are regional endemics potentially also at risk of parasitism. Careful monitoring of Shiny Cowbirds on the Peninsula, and the effects on species already resident there, will be important.

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