

SHINY COWBIRDS (*MOLOTHRUS BONARIENSIS*) ON NORTH ANDROS ISLAND, BAHAMAS

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From 13-30 July 1994, I observed and photographed Shiny Cowbirds on several occasions in the settlement of Staniard Creek, North Andros Island, Bahamas. I saw up to five individuals (2 males, 3 females or juveniles) at one time and birds were regularly seen on the western shore of the creek that runs through the settlement.

A recent survey of this island (Baltz, Florida Field Nat. 21:115-117) failed to detect the species, and I believe this record represents the first for the Bahamas. Observers throughout the Bahama Islands should be alert for additional sightings because the spread of this species through the archipelago is worthy of documentation.

THE ABSENCE OF A NATAL PLUMAGE IN THE HISPANIOLAN PALM CHAT, *DULUS DOMINICUS* (DULINAE, PASSERIFORMES)

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Abstract.—The Palm Chat (*Dulus dominicus*) of Hispaniola has no natal plumage. This condition is rare among passerines and allies *Dulus* with *Bombycilla*, which also lacks a natal plumage. *Dulus* and *Bombycilla* are thus set apart at the subfamily level from *Phainopepla*, which has a copious natal down.

The endemic Palm Chat of Hispaniola, usually regarded to be a monotypic family or subfamily, has always presented problems to taxonomists. *Phainopepla* and *Bombycilla* are usually regarded to be the closest relatives of *Dulus*. Comparisons of natal plumages among avian groups can provide clues to relationships. However, a comprehensive review of the literature on the Palm Chat revealed no information on its neonatal plumage (Wetherbee 1992). Thus, my observations of the Palm Chat at hatching are of special interest.

Absolute nakedness at hatching is a rare condition among passerine genera. Wetherbee (1957) found complete nakedness only in such diverse genera as *Passer*, *Progne*, and *Bombycilla*. On 10 May 1994 at Monción, República Dominicana, I observed three neonate *Dulus*, which were completely naked. Whereas the absence of neosoptiles in *Dulus* strongly supports its putative alliance with *Bombycilla*, this absence stands in contrast to the condition in *Phainopepla*.

The most appropriate way to show the relationships is to combine *Dulus* and *Bombycilla* in the same subfamily and to keep *Phainopepla* in its own subfamily. I suggest that terms Dulidae and/or Dulinae be discarded, for nothing is quite so useless as a monotypic higher category unless there is good reason for such.

Other notes on *Dulus* neonates include: rictal flanges and mouth lining bright yellow (not stained by berries, although the diet consisted of such fruits); skin dark gray; dorsal feather tract (in phantom) minimally expanded and (strangely) without an apterium—absence of a mid-dorsal apterium is not expected for a species often placed so early (before the crows) in the passerine series.

Literature Cited

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Wetherbee, D.K. 1992. La ave nacional de República Dominicana: el esclavo—l'esclave. *Dulus dominicus* de Hispaniola, y las especies en peligro de extinción. Privately published, Shelburne, Massachusetts. 120pp.

PUERTO RICAN PARROTS DID IT AGAIN IN 1994: ONCE AGAIN THEY HAVE SHOWN THEIR ABILITY TO RECOVER

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The Puerto Rican Parrot (*Amazona vittata*), one of the most endangered of parrots, reached the lowest number of individuals by 1975, with a total wild population of 13 birds. During the following 14 years, (1975-1989), the population

increased from 13 to 47 birds in the wild. However, on 18 September 1989, Hurricane Hugo passed over northeastern Puerto Rico, after which the population declined to about 22 parrots in the wild. The hurricane caused major habitat