

## 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. 1957. Natal plumages and downy pteryloses of passerine birds of North America. *Bull. Am. Mus. Nat. Hist.* 113:339-436.  
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

damage in the Caribbean National Forest, the last refuge of the Puerto Rican Parrot. No damage occurred to the captive population at the Luquillo Aviary, where 53 birds existed at that time.

Breeding activity in 1990 was low, but in 1991 the wild population produced a record successful nests. Six pairs of parrots in 1992 produced 10 chicks and with another fostered from the Luquillo aviary, a total of 11 chicks fledged from wild nests. In 1993, a project record of 22 chicks hatched and 15 fledged: 13 from wild nests and 9 in captivity.

In 1994, 14 chicks fledged from wild nests, whereas a total of 7 chicks fledged in captivity at the Luquillo Aviary. Most importantly, more new breeding pairs were formed using DNA fingerprinting information as the primary selection criteria. As a result of this, seven pairs of captive Puerto Rican Parrots laid fertile eggs.

Improved management techniques that have contributed to this improvement in productivity include structural modi-

fications of natural cavities, fostering techniques, use of molecular genetics techniques to maximize genetic representation, a closed circuit camera system to monitor captive breeders, and use of PVC nesting structures for captive breeders to provide a re-usable, cleaner, and drier environment.

A second captive program has begun in a cooperative effort with the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico Department of Natural and Environmental Resources. Six breeding pairs of captive Puerto Rican Parrots were transferred to the Río Abajo Aviary during 1993 to form the nucleus of the second captive population. Two chicks fledged at that aviary in 1994.

The recent successes for the recovery of the Puerto Rican Parrot are the result of many factors, including the inherent ability of the parrot to recover, the enhanced management techniques, and the effective habitat management but, most of all, the special touch of a group of people highly committed to the recovery of the parrot.

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#### ABSTRACTS OF SELECTED PAPERS PRESENTED AT THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE SOCIETY OF CARIBBEAN ORNITHOLOGY, MARTINIQUE, FRENCH WEST INDIES

##### PROYECTO EVALUATIVO DE LAS POBLACIONES DE TORCAZA CABECIBLANCA (*COLUMBA LEUCOCEPHALA*) EN LA ISLA DE LA JUVENTUD, CUBA

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Las poblaciones de Torcaza Cabeciblanca (*Columba leucocephala*) en la Isla de la Juventud, no han sido evaluadas desde el final de la década de los años 70. Aunque no existen registros de estudios recientes, hay evidencias de que la especie aún se mantiene en la Isla y posee perspectivas de incrementarse sus poblaciones. En el presente proyecto, se desarrollará un estudio evaluativo integral de las poblaciones existentes con vistas a obtener los elementos científico-técnicos necesarios para la protección y manejo adecuado de este recurso. La situación general de las colonias reproductivas y zonas de alimentación, los cruces de torcazas entre ambas áreas, períodos y éxitos reproductivos, depredadores y otros aspectos biológicos, serán estudiados en el presente proyecto.

##### EFFECTS OF HURRICANE HUGO ON MONTSERRAT'S FOREST BIRDS AND THEIR HABITAT

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As a result of Hurricane Hugo, damage sustained by Montserrat's forests was severe. Throughout the island's three interior mountain ranges (Centre, Soufriere, & South Soufriere Hills) from lower-to mid-elevations, 52% (n=203) of the moist- and wet-forest trees sampled suffered loss or damage to their primary branches. Trunks, often snapped of all branches, were left standing. Six months following Hugo, many of the surviving tree trunks showed extensive generation of primary branches and foliage via adventitious budding and epicormic growth. Damage was more severe at higher elevations in hygrophytic forest and especially in elfin woodland on the upper slopes of the South Soufriere Hills, the hardest hit by Hugo. Of 369 trees sampled, 63% suffered trunk snap or throw (including uprooting and "trunk lean" > 45 degrees). A combination of mist-net, transect, and fixed-radius point count census methods showed that six months