

SIGHT RECORDS OF CEDAR WAXWING (*BOMBYCILLA CEDRORUM*) FROM PUERTO RICO

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Abstract: We report seven new sight records of the Cedar Waxwing (*Bombycilla cedrorum*) from Cayey and Humacao, Puerto Rico, and discuss them in a historical, ecological, and seasonal context. An immature was observed at Cedro Ward (Cayey) in 1981 and two adults were observed foraging in the understory of a shade coffee plantation near the same locality in 1982. Up to five were observed on different occasions in an urban forested environment on the Humacao campus of the University of Puerto Rico in 2007. These sightings were between 27 October and 17 May, representing the earliest and latest records for the species in Hispaniola and Puerto Rico. Six species of plants are added to its diet while on its wintering grounds.

Key words: *Bombycilla cedrorum*, Cedar Waxwing, diet, habitat use, Puerto Rico, sightings

Resumen: AVISTAMIENTOS DE LA PICOTERA (*BOMBYCILLA CEDRORUM*) EN PUERTO RICO. Informamos siete nuevos avistamientos de la Picotera (*Bombycilla cedrorum*) en localidades de Cayey y Humacao, Puerto Rico, y discutimos los mismos en un contexto histórico, ecológico, y estacional. Un juvenil fue observado en el Bo. Cedro (Cayey) en el 1981 y dos adultos forrajeando en el sotobosque de una plantación de café cercana al mismo sitio en el 1982. En el 2007, hasta cinco individuos fueron observados en diferentes ocasiones en el bosque urbano ubicado en el campus de la Universidad de Puerto Rico en Humacao. Los avistamientos fueron hechos entre 27 de octubre y 17 de mayo, lo que representan los informes más tempranos y tardes para la especie en la Española y Puerto Rico. Se informan seis especies de plantas como nuevas en la dieta de estas aves en los lugares en donde pasan el invierno.

Palabras clave: avistamientos, *Bombycilla cedrorum*, dieta, Picotera, Puerto Rico, uso de hábitat

Résumé : OBSERVATIONS DU JASEUR D'AMÉRIQUE (*BOMBYCILLA CEDRORUM*) À PORTO RICO. Nous rapportons sept observations du Jaseur d'Amérique (*Bombycilla cedrorum*) à Cayey et Humacao, Porto Rico, que nous analysons du point de vue historique, écologique et phénologique. Un immature a été observé à Cedro Ward (Cayey) en 1981 et deux adultes se nourrissant dans le sous-bois d'une plantation de café d'ombre près de la même localité en 1982. En 2007, jusqu'à cinq oiseaux ont été observés à différentes occasions dans un environnement urbain boisé sur le campus d'Humacao de l'Université de Porto Rico Ces observations ont été réalisées entre le 27 octobre et 17 mai, représentant les données les plus précoces et les plus tardives pour cette espèce à Hispaniola et Porto Rico. Six espèces de plantes ont été ajoutées à son régime alimentaire sur ses sites d'hivernage.

Mots clés : *Bombycilla cedrorum*, Jaseur d'Amérique, observations régime alimentaire, Puerto Rico, utilisation de l'habitat

The Cedar Waxwing (*Bombycilla cedrorum*) is an irruptive passage or wintering migrant to the Bahamas, Cuba, Hispaniola, and Jamaica, and an accidental visitor to Puerto Rico, U. S. Virgin Islands, and the Lesser Antilles (Bond 1971, Benito-Espinal 1990, Evans 1990, Arendt 1992, Raffaele *et al.* 1998, White 1998, Keith *et al.* 2003, Hallet 2006). Wiley and Bauer (1985) regarded the Cedar Waxwing as a rare transient to plantations and tabonuco forest at the Caribbean National Forest, Puerto Rico. Raffaele (1990) cited two sightings, apparently those mentioned above by Wiley and Bauer (1985), from Puerto Rico, and one from St. John, but no further details were reported. Oberle (2000) considered the Cedar Waxwing accidental in Puerto Rico and cited a record from Culebra in February 1999. In this note I report seven new records from Puerto

Rico, and discuss them in a historical, ecological, and seasonal context.

OBSERVATIONS

On 27 October 1981, RAPR observed for a few seconds an immature Cedar Waxwing feeding on fruits of wild fig (*Ficus trigonata*) at Cedro ward, Cayey (east-central Puerto Rico). During the first week of March 1982, RAPR twice observed a pair of adult Cedar Waxwings in a shaded coffee plantation near the same locality. The crest, black mask, and yellow on the tip of the tail of one bird were clearly observed. Both birds were foraging on shrubs of the family Melastomataceae (*Mecranium amigdalinum* and *Miconia* spp.), at the lower strata 2-3 m above the forest floor.

On 13 May 2007, while conducting a weekly

breeding bird survey on the Humacao campus of the University of Puerto Rico, RAPR observed a pair of adult Cedar Waxwings foraging at a height of about 10 m in a black olive tree (*Bucida buceras*). The pair, as well as a pair of Puerto Rican Spindalis (*Spindalis portoricensis*), were consuming the fruits of the tree. The group of birds moved from one branch to another to access the ripe fruits, and then departed to a forested area in the southern sector of the campus.

On 14 May 2007, RAPR returned to the campus very early and surveyed the only area on campus with several trees and shrubs bearing fruits. At 0730 a pair of waxwings arrived and fed on fruits of wild coffee (*Casearia guianensis*) and burning love (*Ixora coccinea*). The birds fed for a few minutes, moving from one shrub to another. The crests, red drops on the wings, and yellow on the tails were clearly observed. The birds did not have white markings or prominent yellow fringes on the wings, thus excluding the possibility of the highly unlikely Bohemian Waxwing (*B. garrulus*). After feeding, the birds left the area, following a pair of Puerto Rican Spindalis.

On 17 May 2007 at 1800, we revisited the black olive tree. On this occasion three birds were observed. AMO was also able to observe two additional birds in a nearby branch. The birds continued foraging from one branch to another, and finally left, once again, in the direction of the forested area in the southern sector of the campus.

The following day, colleague Luis Nieves visited the campus very early to try to get photos of the birds. However, he failed to observe them. We also tried to locate the birds in the afternoon but apparently they had already departed from the campus.

DISCUSSION

According to Keith *et al.* (2003), all sightings in Hispaniola were from the highlands from December to February. Oberle's (2000) sighting is also from February. Thus, our sightings from 27 October to 14 May represent the earliest and latest for the species in Jamaica, Hispaniola, and Puerto Rico. The observations at Cayey in a shade coffee plantation underscore the importance of agroforestry ecosystems for local and migratory birds (Wunderle and Latta 1998, Carlo *et al.* 2004, Gleffe *et al.* 2006). The Humacao campus is near the east coast of the island; although it has a small natural forest area, most of the vegetation on campus consists of rows of trees planted along parking lots and open spaces. Thus, urban forests are also important for this mi-

grant. The six species of plants used as food by the waxwing in Puerto Rico provide new information on its diet during the non-breeding season.

We reviewed Bond's supplements to his Birds of the West Indies, as well as every volume of the local journal *El Bientevio*, which include a list of bird reports in each issue. We were unable to find any records of Cedar Waxwing from Puerto Rico subsequent to those mentioned above. Thus, our sightings at Humacao appear to be the first for Puerto Rico in at least 22 years since the observations of Wiley and Bauer (1985). We agree with Raffaele *et al.* (1998) and Oberle's (2000) positions that the species is an accidental migrant in Puerto Rico.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We thank Ariel Diaz, Leopoldo Miranda, and Wayne Arendt for reviewing and improving this manuscript.

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BOOK REVIEW

A GUIDE TO THE BIRDS OF ANGUILLA.—
 Steve H. Holliday, Karim V. D. Hodge, and Damien
 E. Hughes. 2007. The Royal Society for the Protec-
 tion of Birds. 122 pp. ISBN: 1-905601-10-7.
 \$20.00; available from Anguilla National Trust
 (www.axanationaltrust.org).

The most recent in a series of regional guides that
 have been designed to appeal to birdwatchers, tour-
 ists, teachers and students, the Royal Society for the
 Protection of Birds in partnership with the Anguilla
 National Trust, the Anguilla Government, and the
 UK Government has produced this nicely designed
 and informative book. Following a fairly standard
 format, the book presents 60 commonly occurring
 species from Anguilla.

Anguilla, located in the extreme north-eastern
 corner of the Lesser Antilles, consists of the main
 island of Anguilla as well as several other offshore
 islets or cays. These dry, low-lying islands, with a
 maximum elevation of only 65 m, are dominated by
 dry forest and scrub habitats, but also contain man-
 groves, brackish and freshwater ponds, and coastal
 and marine environments. Some 132 species of
 birds have been recorded here since 1990, and all
 are listed in this book. Many are migratory water-
 fowl, shorebirds, and Neotropical migratory song-
 birds. There are no endemic species, but three
 Lesser Antillean specialties are commonly found,
 including Green-throated Carib (*Eulampis holos-
 ericeus*), Pearly-eyed Thrasher (*Margarops fusca-
 tus*), and the Lesser Antillean Bullfinch (*Loxigilla
 noctis*), while a fourth regional specialty, the Antil-
 lean Crested Hummingbird (*Orthorhynchus cris-
 tatus*), is a scarce resident. The islands are also
 known for their important seabird nesting colonies,
 most notably the Sooty Tern (*Onychoprion fusca-
 tus*) and Brown Booby (*Sula leucogaster*) colonies
 on Dog Island, Roseate Tern's (*Sterna dougallii*) on
 Scrub Island, and Bridled Tern's (*Onychoprion an-*

aethetus) on Sombrero. For some readers, Sombrero
 will be familiar as it was briefly in the conserva-
 tionist's spotlight when it was proposed as a privately
 developed rocket launch site several years ago. But
 that proposal was later withdrawn and the island has
 since been designated a protected area.

This guide begins with a brief introduction to
 Anguilla and its history, culture, economic pres-
 sures, wildlife habitats, and biodiversity, plus con-
 servation threats and opportunities. There follows a
 short chapter on the Anguilla National Trust, the
 statutory body established in 1988 as the nation's
 "custodian on matters of natural, cultural, archaeo-
 logical, and environmental importance." Four im-
 portant bird areas have been identified for Anguilla,
 and these are described. The introductory chapters
 conclude with a habitat-based description of the bird
 species one might expect to see at different seasons
 of the year on the islands.

Species accounts are divided among three main
 habitats, including seabirds, waterbirds, and land-
 birds. For each species, identifying characteristics,
 similar species, seasonality, and locations where
 one might expect to see the bird are described. Lo-
 cal notes of interest from observations of the species
 in Anguilla are also included, as is a unique small
 box where observers might add their own notes.
 The guide is illustrated with very nice photographs
 of each of these 60 common species. Although usu-
 ally only a single image of the species in its most
 typical plumage is presented, unlike many similar
 guides these photographs are of high quality with
 excellent color and definition. In a few cases, both a
 male and a female are shown, and in one case—the
 Masked Booby (*Sula dactylatra*)—a juvenile is
 shown though not identified as such. Following
 each set of species accounts, less common species
 that have been recorded in Anguilla are listed with a
 very brief mention of their status. These are helpful
 for more experienced birders with access to more