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The Southern Lapwing (*Vanellus chilensis*) breeding  
in the Dutch Caribbean and notable new records for the  
Caribbean Martin (*Progne dominicensis*) and  
Killdeer (*Charadrius vociferus*)

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## The Southern Lapwing (*Vanellus chilensis*) breeding in the Dutch Caribbean and notable new records for the Caribbean Martin (*Progne dominicensis*) and Killdeer (*Charadrius vociferus*)

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**Abstract** We provide the first documentation of Southern Lapwing (*Vanellus chilensis*) breeding in the Dutch Caribbean and new island records for the Caribbean Martin (*Progne dominicensis*) and Killdeer (*Charadrius vociferus*).

**Keywords** breeding bird, *Charadrius vociferus*, Dutch Caribbean, Netherlands Antilles, *Progne dominicensis*, *Vanellus chilensis*

**Resumen** Nidificación de *Vanellus chilensis* en las Antillas Holandesas e importantes nuevos registros para el Caribe de *Progne dominicensis* y *Charadrius vociferus*—Brindamos la primera documentación de *Vanellus chilensis* nidificando en las Antillas Holandesas y nuevos registros en las islas de *Progne dominicensis* y *Charadrius vociferus*.

**Palabras clave** Antillas Holandesas, *Charadrius vociferus*, individuos reproductores, *Progne dominicensis*, *Vanellus chilensis*

**Résumé** Nidification du Vanneau téro (*Vanellus chilensis*) dans les Antilles néerlandaises et nouvelles mentions pour l'Hirondelle à ventre blanc (*Progne dominicensis*) et le Pluvier kildir (*Charadrius vociferus*)—Nous documentons la première mention de nidification du Vanneau téro (*Vanellus chilensis*) dans les Antilles néerlandaises, ainsi que de nouvelles mentions pour l'Hirondelle à ventre blanc (*Progne dominicensis*) et le Pluvier kildir (*Charadrius vociferus*).

**Mots clés** Antilles néerlandaises, *Charadrius vociferus*, oiseaux nicheurs, *Progne dominicensis*, *Vanellus chilensis*

The avifauna of the Dutch Caribbean—Aruba, Curaçao, St. Martin, Bonaire, St. Eustatius, and Saba—remains an interesting area of scientific study and the number of documented breeding species continues to grow (Prins *et al.* 2009). One species long known to visit the leeward Dutch islands (Aruba, Bonaire, and Curaçao) off the coast of Venezuela and often suspected of breeding is the Southern Lapwing (*Vanellus chilensis*). Individuals showing suspected breeding-related behavior were seen on Aruba in 2004 and 2005 and on Bonaire in 2006, but breeding was not confirmed (Prins *et al.* 2009). A pair of this species was seen and photographed (Fig. 1a) by CDH at the freshwater catchment of Rio Magdalena (Ri Malein) on Curaçao (12°17'07.13"N, 69°06'30.91"W) on 16 December 2011, again showing suspected nest-related behavior. On 22 May 2012, CDH confirmed that the pair had nested at the same spot and had laid three eggs in an open grassland field about 100 m from the catchment basin (Fig. 1b). During a visit to the area on 26 June 2012, it was noted that the eggs had hatched and pictures were taken of one of

the three chicks seen in the catchment area (Fig. 1c). The adult birds had notably brown heads. The broad white face-band did not reach up to the center of the crown and the black of the face did not connect to the black of the breast. Therefore, they likely belong to the *V. c. cayennensis* subspecies found in South America north of the Amazon (Prins *et al.* 2009).

The Southern Lapwing is common and widespread in grasslands and wetlands throughout South America and appears to have benefited from the extensive deforestation caused by human development (Santos 2010). Yet little is known of the Southern Lapwing's breeding habits (Naranjo 1991). The species is the only crested wader of South America and in prehistoric times is believed to have also been common in Central America and the Caribbean, and once even ranged as far north as Florida (Morgan and Emslie 2010). Recent studies show that it may be regaining some of its previously lost territory as it has been spreading northward and has even shown important recent increases in abundance in the Caribbean (e.g., Trinidad and Tobago; French 1991). The species was first recorded for Curaçao by AOD in 2004, and appears to be increasing in numbers there, as well as on Aruba and Bonaire (Prins *et al.* 2009). Our new sight records for this species for various locations on Curaçao and Aruba are listed in Table 1.

The Caribbean Martin (*Progne dominicensis*) is a large, strik-

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**Fig. 1.** (a) Southern Lapwing nesting pair at Rio Magdalena, Curaçao (16 December 2011), (b) nest with three eggs (22 May 2012), and (c) downy, camouflaged chick playing dead (26 June 2012). Photographs by CDH.

ingly blue swallow with a white belly and is a relatively common breeding bird throughout most of the Greater and Lesser Antilles (Raffaele et al. 2003). As a breeding species, it is endemic to the Caribbean where nesting occurs principally from March through June (Raffaele et al. 2003). It is suspected to winter along the coast of northeastern South America, from Venezuela (Hilty 2003) south to Suriname (Ottema et al. 2009). In the Dutch Caribbean, the bird has been documented in migration, principally in May and September–October, from all three of the Leeward Islands off Venezuela (Prins et al. 2009). In the Windward Islands of the Dutch Caribbean (Saba, St. Eustatius, and St. Martin), it has been confirmed as a rare breeding bird for St. Martin, based on nesting documented in 1965 (Voous and Koelers 1967, Hoogerwerf 1977), but has never been confirmed as breeding in St. Eustatius.

On Saba and St. Eustatius, several Caribbean Martins were seen by SS during migration periods in the years 2009 to 2012. They were seen pursuing aerial insects over Flat Point, Saba, and Quill National Park, St. Eustatius. Caribbean Martins suspected of breeding were also seen during the summer periods on both islands. On 6 July 2011, SS saw birds around Well’s Bay, Saba, and on 9 July 2011 around Concordia Bay, St. Eustatius. On St. Eustatius, it was possible to watch the birds flying into and out of the nesting cavities dug into the loose sediments of the eroded coastal bluffs at Concordia. On 10 June 2012, SS again saw numerous Caribbean Martins flying into and out of nest holes at Concordia (17°30'14.94"N, 62°58'40.76"W). On 23 June 2013, AOD photographed adults visiting nesting holes (Fig. 2) and heard young begging for food. Our observations are the first to confirm nesting on St. Eustatius and recent nesting in the Dutch Caribbean. Observations suggest there may also be a breeding colony at Well’s Bay, Saba, but neither nesting cavities nor nesting can be confirmed.

For the Dutch Caribbean, the Killdeer (*Charadrius vociferus*) has been known principally as a passage migrant and winter visitor with occasional breeding documented for Aruba and

**Table 1.** New sight records for Southern Lapwing in the Leeward Dutch Caribbean.

Location	Date	No. of Birds	Comments
<i>Aruba</i>			
Bakval	8 June 2012 <sup>a</sup>	1	
<i>Curaçao</i>			
Klein Kwartier	17 August 2011 <sup>b</sup>	2	a pair
Muizenberg	3 November 2011 <sup>b</sup>	5	2 pairs + 1
Muizenberg	12 February 2013 <sup>b</sup>	2	a pair
Rio Magdalena	16 December 2011 <sup>b</sup>	2	nesting behavior
Rio Magdalena	22 May 2012 <sup>b</sup>	2	nest with 3 eggs
Rio Magdalena	26 June 2012 <sup>b</sup>	5	2 adults, 3 chicks

<sup>a</sup>Observer: SS

<sup>b</sup>Observer: CDH

Curaçao (Prins et al. 2009). On 23 June 2013, AOD observed up to 10 pairs of this species dispersed over 1 km of shoreline on the grassy cliffs of Concordia and Zeelandia on the east coast of St. Eustatius. The birds displayed frantic and persistent distractive behaviors as well as intraspecific territorial defense by males. The species has not been recorded breeding in St. Eustatius before, and even though no nests or fledglings could be found, our observations suggest that the species might be breeding on the island. The species is a long-known summer breeder in the Greater Antilles (*C. v. ternominatus*), but in the northern Lesser Antilles has only been reported as an uncommon nonbreeding resident (Raffaele et al. 2003).

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**Fig. 2.** Adult Caribbean Martin at nesting cavity in the coastal bluffs of Concordia Bay, St. Eustatius (23 June 2013). Photograph by AOD.

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