

FIRST RECORD OF VARIEGATED FLYCATCHER (*EMPIDONOMUS V. VARIUS*) AND FURTHER RECORDS OF HOUSE SPARROW (*PASSER DOMESTICUS*) FOR LOS ROQUES ARCHIPELAGO, VENEZUELA

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Abstract: Five Variegated Flycatchers (*Empidonomus v. varius*) and four House Sparrows (*Passer domesticus*) were observed in Gran Roque Island, Los Roques Archipelago, Venezuela, in July 2005. These represent the first and second records, respectively, of these species in the archipelago, extending the known records of Variegated Flycatcher in Venezuela northward about 160 km, and providing evidence for further colonization for the House Sparrow.

Key words: distributional records, *Empidonomus v. varius*, Los Roques Archipelago, *Passer domesticus*, Venezuela

Resumen: PRIMER REGISTRO DEL ATRAPAMOSCAS VETEADO (*EMPIDONOMUS VARIUS VARIUS*) Y NUEVOS REGISTROS DEL GORRIÓN (*PASSER DOMESTICUS*) EN EL ARCHIPIÉLAGO LOS ROQUES, VENEZUELA. Cinco Atrapamoscas Veteados (*Empidonomus varius varius*) y cuatro Gorriones (*Passer domesticus*) fueron observados en la isla de Gran Roque, Archipiélago Los Roques, Venezuela, en julio de 2005. Estos representan, respectivamente, el primer y segundo registros de estas especies en el archipiélago, extendiendo la distribución conocida de la primera en Venezuela en unos 160 km hacia el norte y evidenciando la consolidación de la colonización por parte de la segunda especie.

Palabras clave: Archipiélago Los Roques, *Empidonomus v. varius*, *Passer domesticus*, registros distribucionales, Venezuela

Résumé : PREMIÈRE OBSERVATION DU TYRAN TACHETÉ (*EMPIDONOMUS VARIUS VARIUS*) ET NOUVELLES OBSERVATIONS DU MOINEAU DOMESTIQUE (*PASSER DOMESTICUS*) DANS L' ARCHIPEL DE LOS ROQUES (VÉNÉZUELA). Cinq Tyrans tachetés (*Empidonomus v. varius*) et quatre Moineaux domestiques (*Passer domesticus*) ont été observés sur l'île de Gran Roque, Archipel de Los Roques, Venezuela, en juillet 2005. Il s'agit respectivement des première et deuxième observations de ces espèces dans l'archipel, élargissant la répartition connue au Vénézuéla du Tyran tacheté de 160 km vers le nord, et fournissant des informations sur une future colonisation par le Moineau domestique.

Mots-clés : Archipel de Los Roques, distribution, *Empidonomus v. varius*, *Passer domesticus*, Vénézuéla

LOS ROQUES ARCHIPELAGO, Dependencias Federales, is located 160 km north of the Venezuelan coast (11°44'45" to 11°58'36" N, 66°32'42" to 66°52'57" W). It is an atoll comprised of > 200 banks and more than 15 coralline cays, forming an irregular oval around a shallow lagoon surrounded by two large barrier reefs (Fig. 1). The archipelago was protected as a National Park in 1972, declared a Ramsar site in 1996, and as an Important Bird Area in 2005 (BirdLife International and Conservation International 2005). The avifauna of Los Roques National Park has been described by Phelps and Phelps (1950, 1959), Ginés and Yépez (1956), Le-Croy (1976), and Lentino and Rodner (2003). In this note we report one new bird species and further records of a recently reported introduced species in the Los Roques Archipelago.

STUDY AREA AND METHODS

There are three natural terrestrial habitats in the archipelago (Aristeguieta 1956, Villamizar and Zamarro 2003): mangroves, halophyte/psamophyte savannas, and thorny bushes, the latter restricted to Gran Roque. Introduced trees, particularly Sea Grape (*Coccoloba uvifera*; Polygonaceae), are commonly associated with the human settlements of Gran Roque.

We studied birds in the field at four cays. El Gran Roque (11°56'53.6" N, 66°40'53.5" W), which includes all three natural habitats and the largest human settlement, was visited daily from 14-19 July 2005. Maceta de Nube Verde (11°46'38.3" N, 66°42'17.7" W), which has mangrove vegetation and no permanent human presence, was visited on 17 July 2005. Dos Mosquises Sur (11°48'07.3" N, 66°53'07.7" W), which has mangroves and savannas in

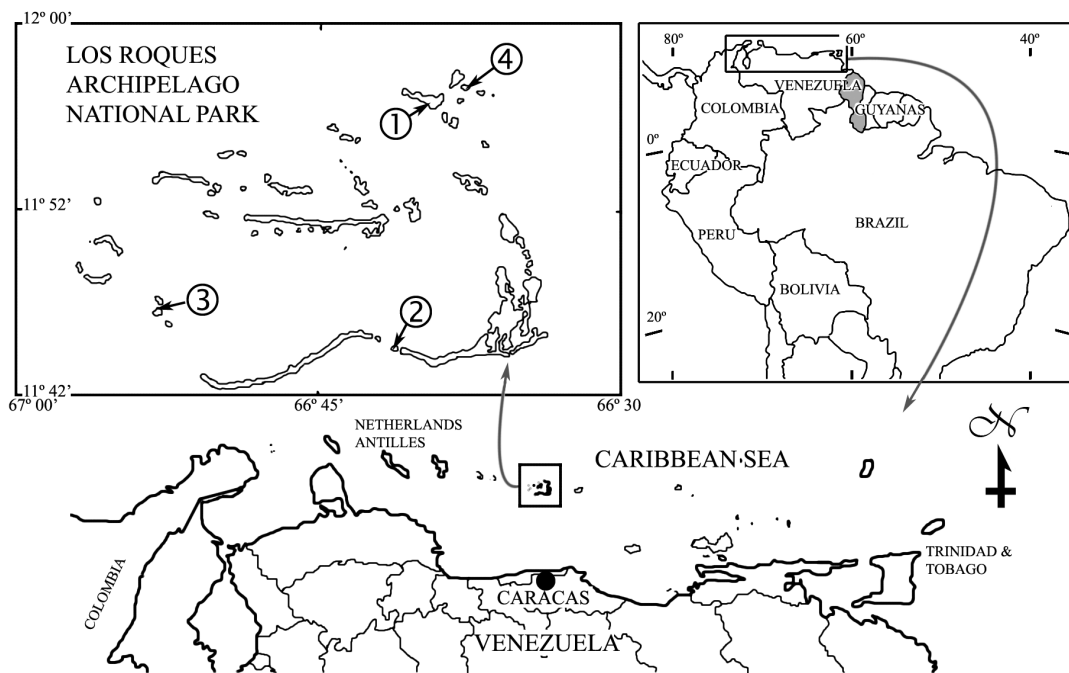


Fig. 1. Los Roques Archipelago. Numbers encircled indicate study sites (for details, see text): (1) Gran Roque; (2) Maceta de Nube Verde; (3) Dos Mosquises Sur; (4) Francisquí.

addition to a few human dwellings and introduced plants, was visited on 18 July 2005. And Francisquí (11°57'53.0" N, 66°38'40.0" W), which has mangrove and savannas plus some permanent human dwellings, was visited on 19 July 2005 (Fig. 1).

OBSERVATIONS AND DISCUSSION

The Variegated Flycatcher (*Empidonomus varius varius*) is an austral migrant breeding in southern South America and is found in Venezuela mainly east of the Andes, from March to October (Meyer de Schauensee and Phelps 1978, Boesman 1999, Hilty 2003). At least five individuals were seen daily from 14-19 July 2005 in the town of Gran Roque, usually perched on the power wires (Fig. 2). They were identified as the nominate race by their more extensive streaking on the underparts in comparison with the locally resident *E. v. rufinus*. These records represent the first for Los Roques archipelago, extending the known records in Venezuela northward about 160 km.

The House Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*) is native to the Palearctic region and has been widely introduced worldwide (Bologna 1978, Hilty 2003). In Venezuela, House Sparrows were previously reported at northern Vargas, Chichiriviche, the Para-

guaná Peninsula (Falcón), and Los Roques Archipelago (Sharpe *et al.* 1997, Azpiroz *et al.* 2006). The latter record consisted of a sighting of an adult male in breeding plumage on Gran Roque Island on 15 July 2004. Two males and two females were seen daily in the vicinity of the airport at Gran Roque, from 15-19 July 2005, representing the second observation of the species on Los Roques and the first of females in the archipelago. This observation may be evidence of further colonization.

The presence of both species in the most heavily inhabited and altered portion of the archipelago, combined with their absence from the most pristine areas of Gran Roque and other remnant cays, suggests that they favour habitats altered by human activities. Furthermore, the presence of the House Sparrow is of particular concern because it is considered a serious pest elsewhere, often displacing native birds (Hilty 2003), and because it is well known that native biological communities of small islands may be poorly adapted to the threat posed by exotic introductions.

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Fig. 2. Variegated Flycatcher (*Empidonomus varius varius*) in Los Roques Archipelago.

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