

FIRST CUBAN OCCURRENCE OF ORANGE BISHOP
(*EUPLECTES FRANCISCANUS*)

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Abstract: The first record of Orange Bishop (*Euplectes franciscanus*) for Cuba is reported from a female collected by José Bauzá at Las Morlas, Salinas de Varadero, Matanzas in 1959. This also constitutes the earliest record of the family Ploceidae in Cuba.

Key words: Cuba, distributional record, *Euplectes franciscanus*, exotic, Orange Bishop

Resumen: PRIMERA APARICIÓN EN CUBA DEL OBISPO NARANJA (*EUPLECTES FRANCISCANUS*). El primer registro de Obispo Naranja (*Euplectes franciscanus*) para Cuba se reporta a partir de una hembra colectada por José Bauzá en Las Morlas, Salinas de Varadero, Matanzas, en 1959. Este también constituye el registro más temprano conocido de la familia Ploceidae en Cuba.

Palabras clave: Cuba, *Euplectes franciscanus*, exótico, Obispo Naranja, registro de distribución

Résumé : PREMIERE OBSERVATION CUBAINE D'EUPLECTE FRANCISCAIN (*EUPLECTES FRANCISCANUS*). La première observation cubaine d'un Euplecte franciscain provient d'une femelle collectée par José Bauzá à Las Morlas, Salinas de Varadero, Matanzas en 1959. Il s'agit aussi de la première observation pour la famille des Ploceidae à Cuba.

Mots-clés : aire de répartition, Cuba, espèce exotique, Euplecte franciscain, *Euplectes franciscanus*

The Orange Bishop (*Euplectes franciscanus*), also known as the Northern Red Bishop, is native to Africa, where it occurs from Senegal and Sudan to Cameroon, eastern Congo, northern Uganda, and northeastern Kenya (American Ornithologists' Union 1998). In the West Indies, it was first reported during the 1960s as introduced in Puerto Rico (Raffaele 1989, Raffaele and Kepler 1992), where it now occurs in substantial numbers primarily along the southern coast. Garrido saw large flocks of this species at Punta del Verraco, east of Guánica, Puerto Rico, in the summer of 2002. Elsewhere in the West Indies, Orange Bishop has been reported from Martinique (1983; Bon Saint Côme 1984, 1994, Barré and Bénito-Espinal 1985, Bénito-Espinal 1990, Bénito-Espinal and Hautcastel 2003), Guadeloupe (Bénito-Espinal 1990, Bénito-Espinal and Hautcastel 2003), Barbados (after 1997; Buckley *et al.* 2009), Jamaica (after 1990; Levy 1990, 1993, McConnell and Levy 1994, Broeck *et al.* 2008), and St. Croix, U. S. Virgin Islands (early 1990s; Raffaele *et al.* 1998).

The late José Hernández Bauzá, an excellent Cuban taxidermist and bird lover, amassed three large collections of Cuban bird skins. The first collection was sold to the "Academia Baldor" in Vedado, Cuba. In 1962, Bauzá sold a second collection to the Museo de Historia Natural "Felipe Poey," which

then was a part of the Cuban Academy of Sciences, but subsequently formed the basis of the Museo Nacional de Historia Natural de Cuba (MNHNC). Finally, a third collection, with specimens mainly collected by Garrido for Bauzá (who, by then, was ill and physically disabled), was donated after Bauzá's death by his widow to the MNHNC so the three collections would be together. The first collection, from "Academia Baldor," was brought to the MNHNC after the consolidation of all private schools in Cuba.

Among the birds from the Bauzá collection now deposited in the Ornithology collection of MNHNC is a female specimen (catalogue number B-486; Fig. 1) of *Euplectes franciscanus*, with the following data on the label: "female escapada de jaula—cayó en trampa, Las Morlas, Salinas de Varadero, Matanzas. El 15 de Octubre de 1959. Disecado el 11 de noviembre de 1959. B-486 on a leg tag."

The late James Bond, Curator of Birds, Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia, examined Bauzá's collections several decades ago. Although he inspected the Orange Bishop specimen, he considered it an escaped cage bird and did not identify it. At that time that was a logical conclusion, because none of the species introduced in Puerto Rico had yet been reported as invading Cuba by natural dispersion. Since then, however, Chestnut Mannikin



Fig. 1. Female Orange Bishop (*Euplectes franciscanus*) specimen (catalog # B-486) in the Museo Nacional de Historia Natural de Cuba, collected at Las Morlas, Salinas de Varadero, Matanzas, Cuba, by José H. Bauzá on 15 October 1959. Photo by Arturo Kirkconnell.

(*Lonchura malacca*) (Rodríguez and Rabelo 1997, Kirkconnell and Garrido 1992), Nutmeg Mannikin (*L. punctulata*) (Rodríguez *et al.* 2003), and Grassland Yellow-Finch (*Sicalis luteola*) (Garrido 1997) have established breeding populations in Cuba. In addition, Buckley *et al.* (2009) adduced strong evidence for Grassland Yellow-Finch's natural colonization of, and subsequent expansion within and without, the Lesser Antilles, *contra* the popular but unsupported belief in its "introduction" there. We know of no other individual of Orange Bishop recorded for Cuba, and strongly suspect this was a natural occurrence, possibly from Puerto Rico. We have monitored intensively the bird trade in Cuba, and have never found *Euplectes franciscanus* among cage birds there. On Barbados, the occurrence and behavior of multiple individuals of this species as well as Yellow-crowned Bishop (*E. afer*) at a proven migrant stopover site indicated that dispersal from established introductions, probably on Martinique or possibly Guadeloupe, was occurring (Buckley *et al.* 2009).

This report constitutes the earliest record of the family Ploceidae in Cuba.

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