

UNUSUAL DISTRIBUTION OF WESTERN STRIPE-HEADED TANAGER (*SPINDALIS ZENA*)

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WESTERN STRIPE-HEADED TANAGER (*Spindalis zena*) is a common bird in forest and shrubland in Cuba, Bahamas, Cayman Islands, and Cozumel, Mexico (Raffaele *et al.* 1998). After Hurricane Isidore crossed western Cuba in September 2002, we began to see small flocks of the tanager in parts of Ciudad de La Habana where they formerly did not occur. We thought these were local movements of individuals as a result of the difficult environmental conditions in the aftermath of the hurricane. The storm moved from the southern Caribbean region and through western Cuba. Beginning 17 September through 22 October, we saw many small flocks of tanagers living in Vedado, in the center of La Habana, as well as Calvario, San Francisco de Paula, and National Botanic Garden south of La Habana.

In general, the flocks were composed of from two to 34 individuals and consisted of adult males, females, and immatures. The largest flock (34) was observed in the coastal shrubland of the National Botanic Garden on 19 October, when the members were feeding on small fruits. This coastal shrubland

is unusual as tanager habitat in Cuba, where Western Stripe-headed Tanager lives strictly in woodlands and cays far from the city of La Habana.

The cause of this dispersion is unknown. Perhaps it is related to the hurricane, but several questions remain, including: (1) why are these birds, typical of forest and shrubland habitats, suddenly living in the city?; (2) if they were forced to migrate because of the tropical storm, why did not other forest birds exhibit the same movement?; (3) why did the tanager change its behavior?; and (4) because this is the first time we have seen such a large flocks feeding together in the same site, from where are they coming ?

LITERATURE CITED

RAFFAELE, H., J. WILEY, O. GARRIDO, A. KEITH AND J. RAFFAELE. 1998. A guide to the birds of the West Indies. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.