

ADDITIONAL NOTES ON THE WINTERING STATUS OF
SWAINSON'S WARBLER IN THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

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Abstract. – We report the third and fourth records of Swainson's Warbler (*Limnothlypis swainsonii*) from Hispaniola. All four records have involved mist-netted birds in montane broadleaf forests of Sierra de Bahoruco in the Dominican Republic. The species has never been recorded during extensive ornithological field studies in a variety of shrub-scrub and forested habitats elsewhere in the country. Although Swainson's Warblers use a range of habitats on other Greater Antillean islands, we believe that the species' Hispaniolan distribution may be largely or exclusively confined to high elevation broadleaf forests. We further believe that Swainson's Warbler should be considered a regular, if local and uncommon, winter resident in the Dominican Republic. We encourage focused investigations, using tape-recorded playbacks and mist-netting, of the distribution and habitat associations of this species in other regions of Hispaniola.

Resumen. – NOTAS ADICIONALES SOBRE EL ESTADO DE RESIDENCIA INVERNAL DE LA CIGÜITA DE SWAINSON EN LA REPÚBLICA DOMINICANA. Reportamos el tercer y cuarto registro de la Cigüita de Swainson (*Limnothlypis swainsonii*) en La Española. Los cuatro registros han sido de aves capturadas en redes en el bosque montano latifolio de la sierra de Bahoruco en la República Dominicana. La especie nunca ha sido observada durante investigaciones ornitológicas extensas efectuadas en diversos hábitats arbustivos y boscosos en otras partes del país. Aunque la Cigüita de Swainson ocupa una variedad de hábitats en otras islas de las Antillas Mayores, creemos que la distribución de la especie en La Española podría estar principalmente o exclusivamente limitada a los bosques latifolios a gran elevación. Además, creemos que en la República Dominicana la Cigüita de Swainson debería ser considerada como un residente invernal de ocurrencia habitual, aunque local y rara. Alentamos las investigaciones enfocadas en la distribución y la asociación de hábitats de esta especie en otras regiones de La Española usando grabaciones y redes.

Key words: *distribution, Dominican Republic, habitat use, Limnothlypis swainsonii, montane forests, Swainson's Warbler*

THE RECENT DOCUMENTATION of within- and between-winter site fidelity of Swainson's Warbler (*Limnothlypis swainsonii*) in montane broadleaf forests of the southwestern Dominican Republic suggests that the species may regularly overwinter on Hispaniola (Rimmer and McFarland 1998, Rimmer and Tietz 2000). We report here the third and fourth records of Swainson's Warbler from Sierra de Bahoruco, further supporting the species' status as a regular, if uncommon, winter resident in this mountain range. We captured unbanded Swainson's Warblers at "Estacion Pueblo Viejo" in Parque Nacional Sierra de Bahoruco, Pedernales Province (18° 20' N, 71° 52' W, ca. 1400 m elevation) on 25 January 2000 and 31 January 2001. Pueblo Viejo is 2.6 km southeast of "Palo de Agua," the site of the two previously reported mist-netted birds. Habitats at both sites are classified as "premontane wet forest" (Fisher-Meerow and Judd 1989), which is characterized by a dense understory of shrubs and vines and a solid canopy

of broadleaf trees 8-15 m high. All four Swainson's Warblers at the two sites were captured in microhabitats of very high understory stem density.

Although Swainson's Warbler has only recently been documented to occur on Hispaniola and is considered an "accidental visitor" (Keith *et al.*, in prep.), our banding records from Sierra de Bahoruco show the species to be fifth in relative abundance among the eight species of North American migrants that we have mist-netted in high elevation forests since 1995. Surprisingly, Swainson's Warbler appears to be more abundant in montane broadleaf forests of Sierra de Bahoruco than the ecologically similar Worm-eating Warbler (*Helmitheros vermivorus*), of which we have captured only one individual in nearly 10,000 hours of mist-netting since 1995. These two species co-occur in forested habitats on Jamaica (Graves 1996) and Cuba (Kirkconnell *et al.* 1996), and Worm-eating Warblers are uncommon but regular throughout the Dominican Republic, inhabiting

low elevation dry and wet limestone forests, transitional broadleaf forests, and even sun coffee plantations (Keith *et al.*, in prep.). We found Worm-eating Warblers to be fairly common in mid-elevation broadleaf forests of the Cordillera Septentrional, where we captured four individuals at Loma la Canela (550-600 m elevation) and six birds at Loma el Guaconejo (250-350 m elevation) in only 368 and 345 net-hours, respectively, during January of 2000. No Swainson's Warblers were mist-netted at either site, however, nor has the species ever been recorded during extensive mist-netting studies in a variety of shrub-scrub and forested habitats elsewhere in the Dominican Republic (J. Faaborg and S. Latta, pers. comm.).

Swainson's Warblers have been documented to use a range of habitats on other Greater Antillean islands. These include mangrove, dry coastal scrub, and dry limestone forests in Jamaica (Lack and Lack 1972, Wunderle and Waide 1993, Graves 1996), dry scrub forest in Puerto Rico (J. Faaborg, pers. comm.), wet cattail (*Typha* sp.)/shrub habitat in the Bahamas (M. Case, in Brown and Dickson 1994), and semideciduous lowland forests, low coastal scrub, and swampy areas in Cuba (Kirkconnell *et al.* 1996). In both Cuba and Jamaica, Swainson's Warbler occupies montane forests, and the species reaches its highest recorded wintering densities in the Blue Mountains of Jamaica (Graves 1996). Although it is possible that the Hispaniolan range of Swainson's Warblers is confined to Sierra de Bahoruco, we believe that overall sampling intensity outside this region has been insufficient to detect the species and that Swainson's Warbler may be largely or exclusively restricted to higher elevation broadleaf forests on Hispaniola. Given the existence of extensive montane broadleaf forest habitat in the Cordillera Central, as well as locally in the more highly fragmented Sierra de Neiba range, we expect that Swainson's Warbler occurs in both areas.

Regardless of the status of Swainson's Warbler outside Sierra de Bahoruco, we believe that the species should be considered a regular, if local and uncommon, winter resident in the Dominican Republic. We encourage focused investigations, using tape-recorded playbacks and mist-netting, of the distribution and habitat associations of Swainson's Warbler in other regions of Hispaniola. If in fact this species' Hispaniolan distribution is confined to moist, high elevation broadleaf forests, the factors underlying such limited habitat occupancy warrant careful study.

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