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## A NEW FAMILY AND GENUS OF BIRD (AVES: CAPRIMULGIFORMES: NYCTIBIIDAE) FOR CUBA

ORESTES MARTÍNEZ<sup>1</sup>, ORLANDO H. GARRIDO<sup>2</sup>, GEORGE B. REYNARD<sup>3</sup>,  
WILLIAM SUÁREZ<sup>2</sup>, ARTURO KIRKCONNELL<sup>2</sup>, AND JAMES W. WILEY<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Estación Ecológica Ciénaga de Zapata, Carretera a Playa Larga km 26, Ciénaga de Zapata, Matanzas, Cuba; <sup>2</sup>Museo Nacional de Historia Natural de Cuba, La Habana, Cuba; <sup>3</sup>105 Midway, Riverton, New Jersey, 08077 USA; <sup>4</sup>Grambling Cooperative Wildlife Project, US Geological Survey, Biological Resources Division, PO Box 841, Grambling, Louisiana 71245 USA

*Abstract.*—The Northern Potoo (*Nyctibius jamaicensis*) is reported for the first time from Cuba, based on vocalizations, sightings, and feathers from the Ciénaga de Zapata (Matanzas province) and Sierra de Anafe (La Habana province). In the West Indies, *N. jamaicensis* has been reported only from Hispaniola (including Île de la Gonâve) and Jamaica.

*Resumen.*—UNA NUEVA FAMILIA Y GÉNERO DE AVE (AVES: CAPRIMULGIFORMES: NYCTIBIIDAE) PARA CUBA. El Potú (*Nyctibius jamaicensis*) se reporta por primera vez para Cuba de dos localidades, Ciénaga de Zapata (provincia de Matanzas) y Sierra de Anafe (provincia de la Habana). Su presencia ha sido detectada en base a vocalizaciones grabadas y a la identificación de plumas halladas en los alrededores de su percha.

*Key words:* Cuba, distribution, Northern Potoo, *Nyctibius jamaicensis*, record, status, vocalization

PERHAPS THE MOST SENSATIONAL DISCOVERIES of birds in the West Indies within the last 100 years have been Fermin Z. Cervera's finding of three new species (*Ferminia cerverai*, *Torreornis inexpectata*, and *Cyanolimnas cerverai*) in the Ciénaga de Zapata of Cuba (Barbour 1926, Barbour and Peters 1927) and Angela Kay and Cameron B. Kepler's discovery of a new species of warbler (*Dendroica angelae*) in Puerto Rico (Kepler and Parkes 1972). Here, we report on an exciting discovery of a bird species new to Cuba: the Northern Potoo (*Nyctibius jamaicensis*), found in the same area of Cervera's discoveries in the 1920s.

The potoo was first reported from Cuba in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when Hartlaub (1852:54) listed it among material obtained by the Duque Paul Wilhelm von Württemberg: "32. *Nyctibius jamaicensis* in Cuba. Fehlt bei de la Sagra und Gundlach." Previously, von

Württemberg (1835) published a list of 89 species of birds collected by him in Cuba in 1835, as reported by Gundlach (1876:3,9). Gundlach (1876) did not recognize the potoo as a Cuban bird, however, as he wrote "El Dr. Hartlaub menciona además *Mergus cucullatus*, lo que está bien, y *Nyctibius jamaicensis*, que no se encuentra en la Isla de Cuba, donde hay cuatro especies de Caprimulgidae."

In his *Check-list of birds of the West Indies*, Bond (1956) does not include *N. jamaicensis* for Cuba, but in a footnote in his *Birds of the West Indies* (1936:192), Bond, probably based on Gundlach (1876), stated "there is an old, apparently erroneous record of this species from Cuba." Recently, Ba-callao Mesa *et al.* (1999) included *Nyctibius jamaicensis* in their list of birds of the Ciénaga de Zapata.

At the beginning of the 1980s, Reynard and Gar-

rido were recording nocturnal birds for their album of Cuban bird vocalizations (1988). Reynard detected a low, faint sound of a potoo in the distance while recording in the outskirts of Motel Los Caneyes, near Santa Clara, but Garrido was unable to discern anything.

In 1997, Martínez informed Garrido that local boys spotted an unfamiliar bird near Santo Tomás, Ciénaga de Zapata. Martínez was shown the bird, but did not pay much attention to it. But when, months later, he saw it again in the same spot, he decided to inform Garrido. When Garrido heard of the “bird that looks like a Guabairo [nightjar], but larger, that was sitting upright on a fence post,” he concluded it was a potoo and encouraged Martínez to search for the bird.

A year elapsed without luck, but one evening at sunset, in a different locality near Santo Tomás, Martínez not only was fortunate enough to spot the bird again, but also recorded its voice. Martínez then contacted Garrido and played his recording through the telephone. Garrido immediately recognized the voice of a potoo and urged Martínez to obtain a specimen. The bird, however, has not been observed again. Unfortunately, while Martínez was copying the recording, the tape recorder malfunctioned, and most of the recording was erased, leaving only a faint fragment of it. Reynard listened to the remaining fragment of the recording, but was unable to distinguish anything. Later, Reynard received a fresh recording, in better condition, and this time he recognized the voice of a potoo.

In the meantime, Garrido suggested to Nelson García, the son of a former Zapata bird guide, Rogelio García, that he search for the potoo by imitating its voice. In one of his trips to Ciénaga de Zapata, Arturo Kirkconnell was informed by Nelson García that one night he heard a sound similar to Garrido’s potoo imitation in the vicinity of Molina, but no further information has been obtained by García since then.

Garrido also urged paleontologist William Suárez to search for the potoo near Caimito, near the Sierra de Anafe, a poorly known region about 25 km southwest of La Habana and 140 km west of the Ciénaga de Zapata site. In one of the searches, Suárez, in the company of three local residents, saw a potoo perched on a dead stump within the woods. The bird allowed them to approach to within 10 m before it flew. Months later, Suárez saw the bird again in the same spot, but in subsequent visits, he failed to find it. His last sighting was in 1999.

At the beginning of 2000, Martínez sent Garrido

some feathers that he had gathered at the Santo Tomás site where the bird had been seen earlier. Garrido examined all of the available skins of the genus *Nyctibius* deposited at the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia and the American Museum of Natural History (New York). He identified the feathers as possibly from a *Nyctibius* species. Subsequently, Suárez, Kirkconnell, Storrs Olson, and Carla Dove compared the feathers with those of *Nyctibius* skins in the collection of the Smithsonian Institution. They reached the conclusion that the feathers belonged to *Nyctibius jamaicensis*. The only step remaining to taxonomically verify the Cuban population is to secure a specimen.

In August 2000, Martínez observed a perched potoo near Palpite, Ciénaga de Zapata. Two months later, Martínez and D. Mirecki briefly saw a potoo in a separate locality in the Ciénaga de Zapata. Most recently, Guy Kirwan heard and saw a potoo near Baconao, in eastern Cuba.

The genus *Nyctibius* is distributed from Mexico to southern South America (Cory 1918, Peters 1940, Bond 1956, Clements 1978). Seven species of the genus have been described: *Nyctibius grandis* (Gmelin) 1789; *N. aethereus* (Wied), 1820; *N. griseus* (Gmelin), 1789; *N. leucopterus* (Wied), 1821; *N. bracteatus* Gould, 1846; *N. maculosus* Ridgway, 1912 (placed by some within *N. leucopterus*); and *N. jamaicensis* (Gmelin), 1789 (Monroe and Sibley 1963). Of these, *grandis* and *bracteatus* are the only monotypic taxa. *Nyctibius jamaicensis* occurs from Mexico to Costa Rica, and in the Greater Antilles, where two races are represented: *N. j. abbotti* in Hispaniola (including Île de la Gonâve) and *N. j. jamaicensis* in Jamaica.

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## MEETING ANNOUNCEMENT

## 2001 MEETING OF THE SOCIETY OF CARIBBEAN ORNITHOLOGY

The next meeting of the Society for Caribbean Ornithology (SCO) will be held in Topes de Collante, Cuba from July 15 to July 22, 2001. Topes de Collante is a national park in the Sierra del Escambray, Sancti Spiritus Province, about 340 km east of Havana and about 21 km northwest of the nearest town, which is Trinidad.

A formal announcement, call for papers, and registration materials will be mailed by SCO by mid-January. Information will also be posted on the SCO website (<http://www.nmnh.si.edu/BIRDNET/SCO/index.html>), Ornith-L and NEOORN. For instructions on subscribing to Ornith-L and NEOORN (and other ornithology listservers, see <http://www.nmnh.si.edu/BIRDNET/mainindex.html#ProfInfo>). The same information will also be posted on the Caribbean Biodiversity Conservation listserv on <http://www.egroups.com/group/caribbean-biodiversity>. Information may also be obtained from Dr. Hiram Gonzalez, Cuba Local Committee, at [ecologia@unepnet.inf.cu](mailto:ecologia@unepnet.inf.cu) and [ecologia@ceniai.inf.cu](mailto:ecologia@ceniai.inf.cu), as well as on the web page of the Instituto de Ecología y Sistemática: <http://www.cuba.cu/ciencia/CITMA/AMA/ecologia>. It is critical that conference attendees arrive no later than July 15, because the only way to get to this location is by private bus arranged by the tour operator. The tour operator has arranged for everyone to stay at the Novohotel in Miramar (a suburb of Havana) on the first night. The bus to the meeting site will leave from that hotel the next day. There may be public bus service to Trinidad, but there is probably no public transportation from Trinidad to the park or the hotel. Those who do not arrive on time (e.g., the day before) may not be able to get to the meeting. Renting a car in Cuba is not really any more expensive than elsewhere, but renters must pay an enormous cash deposit as well as the entire fee up front, so for a week's rental, in excess of \$900 in cash is needed for the least expensive car.

The registration fee will be \$75 per person prior to May 15; \$100 thereafter. The banquet fee is \$25. At this time, the anticipated cost is U.S.\$550 per person inclusive of all travel (including airport transfers), lodging, and meals (with the exception of the banquet). U.S. citizens planning to attend this meeting should note that information pertaining to U.S. Treasury Dept. requirements for legal travel to Cuba will be included in the announcements.