GRENADA HOOK-BILLED KITE (*CHONDROHIERAX UNCINATUS MIRUS*) SURVEYS AND NESTING ACTIVITY

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Resumen.—INVENTARIOS Y NIDIFICACIÓN DE LA GAVILÁN DE GRENADA (*CHONDROHIERAX UNCINATUS MIRUS*). En febrero y agosto de 2000, investigamos a los Milanos Pico Ganchudo y observamos 15 individuos. En agosto, localizamos dos parejas anindando y coleccionamos datos sobre la nidificacíon de este especie.

Key words: Chondrohierax uncinatus mirus, *conservation*, *diet, ecology, Grenada, habitat, Hook-billed Kite, nest, status*

WE SURVEYED FOR Grenada Hook-billed Kites (*Chondrohierax uncinatus mirus*) from 22 to 28 February and 2 to 10 August 2000. In February we spent 63.5 hrs, covered 487 km by car, and observed from selected sites throughout the island. We had 19 sightings of kites, which represented an estimate of 15 individual Grenada Hook-billed Kites. Fifteen of these sightings were in the southwestern section of the island. From the information we collected during this survey, it appears that the kites were in some areas and habitats different from the reported preferred habit of the southwestern xeric forests. Our sighting at Palmiste Lake in the wet forest, in the western part of the island, was the first record for a kite in that area. We also detected several birds in the south-central interior region where the species has not been recorded in the wet forest. No nesting activity was observed during this period.

In August we spent 50 hrs searching for kites in the same areas by the same method used in February and conducted 36 hrs of nest observations. Two nesting pairs were located in the southern part of Grenada and two pairs exhibiting nesting behavior were observed in the south-central part of the island. Nests were 15 m and 17 m above ground in 67.5-cm diameter-at-breast (DBH) *Ceiba pentandra* and 59.9-cm DBH *Erythrina micropteryx* trees, respectively. Nest #1 contained a nestling approximately 2-3 weeks of age and at Nest #2 the pair was incubating.

We recorded 156 Grenada Hook-billed Kite prey items, predominantly at nest #1; 133 were identified to species level. Three species of snails comprised all of the identified prey: *Drymaeus dominicus* 55% (*N* = 76), *Orthalicus undatus* 34.6% (*N* = 46), and *Pleurodonte perplexa* 9.8% (*N* = 13). During nest observations, the male delivered 46.8% (73) and the female 53.2% (83) of the snails. The distance between nest #1 and #2 was 2.7 km.

In general, we feel optimistic about the chances of survival of the Grenada Hook-billed Kite and we speculate that the species is more common than previously thought. Perhaps these birds may be adaptable to human-modified habitat to a limited degree. Kites need mature trees for nesting and woodlands for food resources. The survival of this endangered insular kite will depend on maintaining both nesting and foraging habitat. Further investigation is needed to determine kite distribution island-wide, its taxonomic relationship with the mainland subspecies, the existence of breeding pairs in the wetter habitat of the central region of the island, insular movements, survival rate, and general natural history characteristics.

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