

LA CANDELITA *SETOPHAGA RUTICILLA* [AVES: PARULIDAE] NIDIFICANDO EN CUBA

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Dentro de las bijiritas migratorias que arriban a Cuba, la Candelita (*Setophaga ruticilla*) es una de las más comunes como residente invernal. El hecho de encontrarla nidificando en nuestro archipiélago adquiere gran relevancia, ya que no se conocía de un reporte similar para las Antillas y lo cual no era de sorprender, pues ya Garrido y García (*Catálogo de las Aves de Cuba*. Acad. Cienc. Cuba, La Habana, 1975) mencionan que la misma se observa todos los meses del año, por lo que no era de dudar que algunos individuos permanecieran durante el verano en la isla. Kirkconnell en compañía del Dr. Thomas Pharr, observó a esta especie en Blue Mountain, Jamaica en agosto de 1962.

Hasta el presente existen sólo tres reportes válidos al respecto en Cuba, el primero es el hallazgo de José Morales Leal, quien encontró un nido con dos huevos y una hembra incubándolo en un área boscosa llamada San Severino

(Provincia de Camagüey). El segundo, en julio de 1989 fue donado al Museo Nacional de Historia Natural un nido con dos huevos, el cual fue hallado en el interior de un racimo de plátanos (*Musa paradisiaca*) comprado en un mercado, correspondiéndose a dicha especie. El tercero en abril 1990, cuando el autor senior observó dos juveniles en el Jardín Zoológico de la Habana emitiendo notas de reclamo de alimento a la madre que se encontraba a unos 4 metros de ellos. La madre voló hacia ellos y luego los tres juntos volaron hacia otra rama posándose juntos. Los jóvenes eran mucho más pálidos y tenían las rectrices aún no desarrolladas.

Ya con anterioridad, le había sido comentado a Garrido por el hijo de Rogelio García (guía de campo de observadores de aves en la Ciénaga de Zapata) el hallazgo de un nido de Candelita en los alrededores de Soplilar.

AN UNKNOWN PARAKEET ON HISPANIOLA

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In early afternoon of 26 March 1996, Larry Manfredi and I were driving down from the higher elevations of the Sierra de Bahoruco in southwestern Dominican Republic. About 9 km east of El Aguacate border post on the road to Puerto Escondido, in a transition zone between mesic and xeric forest types at 500 m above sea level (a.s.l.), a passing hawk disturbed a large group of psittacines nearby. A flock of 10 parakeets (*Aratinga*) settled in a dead tree next to us. We soon realized that they were not Hispaniolan Parakeets (*A. chloroptera*), which now occur mostly at higher elevations in this region (Dod 1992; pers. obs.), but instead showed characters of the Olive-throated Parakeet (*A. nana*), a species found in Jamaica and Central America (Bond 1961, American Ornithologists' Union 1983). None of the birds showed red anywhere, and all had largely burnt-olive underparts of subtly different shading. Otherwise the birds were mostly rich green (including lower flanks and undertail coverts), with blue flight feathers and long tails which were green above, yellowish-olive below. The orbital region was white and the beak pale horn. We returned to the area the following day and found at least as many similar birds about 2 km farther east, 10 km west of Puerto Escondido. They were mostly in pairs, feeding on the ripe fruit of gumbo limbo trees (*Bursera simaruba*).

The Olive-throated Parakeet is considered by some authorities to consist of two species, the Jamaican Parakeet

(*A. nana*; *sensu stricto*) and the Aztec Parakeet (*A. astec*) of Mexico and Central America (e.g., Howell and Webb 1995). The differences between these taxa, which even Bond (1940) once considered separate species, are subtle and primarily based on measurements and color tones. Our descriptive notes seem inadequate to assign the birds we saw definitely to one form or the other, if indeed they should be assigned to either.

The Jamaican Parakeet is a fairly common and widespread resident of Jamaica, which lies about 200 km west of the westernmost point in Hispaniola and about 500 km west of the location where we saw these birds. Psittacines generally show diagnosable differences among insular populations, and it is unlikely that they can achieve lengthy overwater dispersal or vagrancy readily (Wiley 1993). Such an explanation probably is unlikely to account for *nana*-like birds on Hispaniola.

If these birds themselves were released on Hispaniola or are descendants of birds released there in recent years, it would seem more likely that they would be Aztec rather than Jamaican Parakeets. Far more cage bird traffic originates in Central America than in Jamaica, where the Wildlife Protection Act prohibits capture or exportation of native birds (C. Levy, pers. comm.). A release might have been unintentional, even from a passing ship, and thus be untraceable. It also might have occurred in nearby Haiti, perhaps as a result of civil unrest there.

The most intriguing possibility is that these birds represent a relict of an ancient population on Hispaniola, hitherto overlooked. The parakeets were in a mostly xeric environment in an area where little collecting was done historically, at an elevation below the usual more mesic habitat of *A. chloroptera*. The nearest lower-elevation specimen of the Hispaniolan Parakeet apparently is from Polo, at 600 m a.s.l. about 50 km southeast of our observations (Wetmore and Swales 1931). Since several other avian genera or species show modern links in the Greater Antilles between only Hispaniola and Jamaica (e.g. *Hyetornis*, *Siphonorhis*, "*Kalochelidon*," *Elaenia fallax*, *Myiarchus stolidus*), an avifaunal link between those islands evidently existed at one time.

It may be fairly easy to resolve any question of these parakeets' origin by collecting a small series and studying their skins against all known populations of Olive-throated Parakeets. If distinctive, then presumably they would represent long-isolated relicts. If like Aztec Parakeets, almost certainly they would have been released on the island. If like Jamaican Parakeets, however, it may be difficult to be certain how they got there. I hope Dominican wildlife authorities or others will begin this process. If distinct, almost certainly these parakeets are in need of protection. If exotic, on the other hand, perhaps they should be eradicated to protect the native *A. chloroptera*.

I thank Bill Beaty for facilitating our trip to Hispaniola,

Storrs Olson and Bill Robertson for commenting on earlier drafts of this manuscript, Catherine Levy for updating me on wildlife law and practice in Jamaica, and Larry Manfredi for his companionship, especially for insisting that we study these parakeets carefully rather than simply pass them off as *A. chloroptera*.

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PRIMER REPORTE PARA *PHALAROPUS LOBATUS* EN LA REPÚBLICA DOMINICANA

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Un Red-necked Phalarope (*Phalaropus lobatus*) en plumaje de invierno fue observado el 19 de noviembre de 1995 en estanques de salinas en Calderas, Baní. No se identificó el sexo. Se encontraba en una bandada compuesta de individuos de Greater Yellowlegs (*Tringa melanoleuca*), Lesser Yellowlegs (*T. flavipes*) y Short-billed Dowitchers (*Limnodromus*

griseus). El phalarope fue observado también el día 11 de febrero de 1996 y el 24 de marzo del mismo año en excursiones realizadas por el Club de Observadores de Aves Annabelle Dod a la zona. El ave fue fotografiada en cada una de las fechas en que fue vista. Es el primer reporte de esta especie para la República Dominicana.

NOTAS SOBRE LA ALIMENTACION DE *CROTOPHAGA ANI* (AVES: CUCULIDAE) EN UN PASTIZAL DE LA HABANA, CUBA

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La importancia de conocer el papel ecológico que desempeñan las aves en los ecosistemas donde habitan, va más allá de determinar la estructura y composición de la ornitocenosis de la que forman parte, ya que es conocida la influencia que estas ejercen sobre el hábitat, actuando como dispersoras de semillas, polinizadoras, indicadoras de la calidad ambiental e incluso como biocontroladoras.

Existen varios ejemplos de cómo gracias a la presencia de

ciertas aves en algunos sembrados, ha sido posible ver disminuídas la afectaciones producidas en estos cultivos, sin necesidad de hacer uso de plaguicidas, tales son los casos reportados por Stewart (1973, 1974) en plantaciones de maíz (*Zea mays*) y tabaco (*Nicotiana tabacum*).

Como parte del estudio ecológico-funcional que se lleva a cabo en los pastizales del Instituto de Pastos y Forrajes del Ministerio de la Agricultura, se comenzaron las capturas de