

UNUSUAL NESTING AND OCCURRENCE RECORDS FOR GUAMÁ, PUERTO RICO, 1975-1999

LUCY BUNKLEY-WILLIAMS¹ AND ERNEST H. WILLIAMS, JR.²

¹*Caribbean Aquatic Animal Health Project, Department of Biology, University of Puerto Rico, PO Box 9012, Mayagüez, Puerto Rico 00861-9012; lucy.biologia@darwin.upr.clu.edu;* and ²*Department of Marine Sciences, University of Puerto Rico, PO Box 908, Lajas, Puerto Rico 00667-0980; bert@rmocfis.uprm.edu*

Abstract.—We report the first nesting of the Orange-fronted Parakeet (*Aratinga canicularis*) in western Puerto Rico. Also, we report the first nesting record of the Nutmeg Mannikin (*Lonchura punctulata*), first occurrence of the Magnificent Frigatebird (*Fregata magnificens*), and the Yellow-shouldered Blackbird (*Agelaius xanthomus*), and a 25-year bird list for Guamá, San Germán, Puerto Rico.

Resúmen.—Nosotros reportamos el primer anidaje del Periquito Frentianaranjado (*Aratinga canicularis*) en el oeste de Puerto Rico. También el primer anidaje del Gorrión Canela (*Lonchura punctulata*), primer avistamiento de la Tijerilla ó Rabijunco (*Fregata magnificens*) y la Mariquita ó Capitán (*Agelaius xanthomus*), y el registro de aves en Guamá, San Germán, Puerto Rico por un periodo de 25 años.

WE ARE NOT AWARE of any published records of birds from Barrio Guamá (185.3' N, 670.4' W), San Germán, southwestern Puerto Rico. The area does not support a large or varied bird fauna. It is semi-arid with only intermittent streams, largely open with small patches of scrub on low elevation rolling foothills, persistent moderate to high winds, rocky and poor soils, with moderate to severe human disturbance. Here we present our observations made over a 25-year period (1975-1999) (Table 1).

Orange-fronted Parakeet *Aratinga canicularis* — Raffaele (1989) classified the Orange-fronted Parakeet as rare and recently introduced in Puerto Rico. He noted that small numbers occurred in northeastern Puerto Rico at San Juan and wooded pastures near Las Croabas in Fajardo, but found no evidence of nesting, although he believed the bird may possibly have been established. More recently, Raffaele *et al.* (1998) revised the date of the introduction of the parakeet back to probably the 1960s, and described its status as uncommon, occurring in small numbers, and restricted to Cabezas de San Juan near Fajardo. Pérez-Rivera (pers. comm.), however, noted that there have been reports of hundreds of individuals in Puerto Rico. Christmas Bird Counts at Fajardo show that the numbers of this species are increasing; two were noted in 1994, 15 in 1995, and 58 in 1997 (Norton 1998).

We have observed individuals in Guamá, Puerto Rico, which suggests a range expansion to southwestern Puerto Rico, as well as evidence of nesting there. One immature Orange-fronted Parakeet was observed in a tree at a distance of 10 m for 30 minutes beginning at 09:00, 31 January 1993. One adult and four immature Orange-fronted Parakeets were

observed feeding on seeds in a queen-of-the-flowers tree (*Lagerstoemia speciosa*) for 20 minutes at 09:00, 17 February 1993, and again in the same area at 14:00 in the afternoon of 20 February 1993. Two adult Orange-fronted Parakeets were seen at 08:00 on 5 July 1993 in Guamá. These observations suggest that this bird has become established and nesting has occurred somewhere around Guamá.

Guamá is in the daily flight pattern of the flock of Canary-winged Parakeets (*Brotogeris versicolurus*), which apparently commute between the InterAmerican University Campus in San Germán and the mountains to the north. We are familiar with the Canary-winged Parakeet from its overflights and occasional visits, so we are confident that we are not confusing this bird with the Orange-fronted Parakeet.

Nutmeg Mannikin *Lonchura punctulata* — Raffaele (1989) reported the Nutmeg Mannikin from coastal and lowland habitats throughout Puerto Rico. He found it nested in summer and fall, and occasionally in spring. We observed a pair of mannikins nesting at a higher elevation in Guamá, in the same queen-of-the-flowers tree where the parakeets would later feed. The nest was 3 m from the ground on the outer southwestern edge of the tree. Nest-building began on 20 June 1992. Subsequently, a storm dislodged the nest, and the adults did not return. A pair successfully nested in a mango tree (*Mangifera indica*), 20 m from the queen-of-the-flowers tree mentioned above, beginning 7 May 1993. The nest was on the outer southwestern edge of the tree, 6 m from the ground and 3 m above an adjacent wooden deck. These nests in a new habitat suggest the population is expanding its range. Low numbers of the mannikin have occasionally been observed in other localities in

TABLE 1. Birds observed in Guamá, San Germán, southwestern Puerto Rico, 1975-1999.

Birds observed			Birds observed		
Family	Common and scientific names	Status ¹	Family	Common and scientific names	Status ¹
Fregatidae			Picidae		
	Magnificent Frigatebird <i>Fregata magnificens</i>	R		Puerto Rican Woodpecker <i>Melanerpes portoricensis</i>	C
Ardeidae			Tyrannidae		
	Cattle Egret <i>Bubulcus ibis</i>	C		Gray Kingbird <i>Tyrannus dominicensis</i>	C
Cathartidae				Puerto Rican Flycatcher <i>Myiarchus antillarum</i>	O
	Turkey Vulture <i>Cathartes aura</i>	C	Hirundinidae		
Accipitridae				Bank Swallow <i>Riparia riparia</i>	O
	Red-tailed Hawk <i>Buteo jamaicensis</i>	F		Cave Swallow <i>Hirundo fulva</i>	F
Falconidae			Muscicapidae		
	American Kestrel <i>Falco sparverius</i>	F		Red-legged Thrush <i>Turdus plumbeus</i>	R
Columbidae			Mimidae		
	Rock Dove <i>Columba livia</i>	O		Northern Mockingbird <i>Mimus polyglottos</i>	C
	Zenaida Dove <i>Zenaida aurita</i>	O		Pearly-eyed Thrasher <i>Margarops fuscatus</i>	F
	Common Ground-Dove <i>Columbina passerina</i>	F	Emberizidae		
Psittacidae				Bananaquit <i>Coereba flaveola</i>	C
	Orange-fronted Parakeet <i>Aratinga canicularis</i>	O		Striped-headed Tanager <i>Spindalis zena</i>	O
	Canary-winged Parakeet <i>Brotogeris versicolurus</i>	F		Puerto Rican Bullfinch <i>Loxigilla portoricensis</i>	O
Cuculidae				Yellow-faced Grassquit <i>Tiaris olivacea</i>	F
	Mangrove Cuckoo <i>Coccyzus minor</i>	O		Black-faced Grassquit <i>Tiaris bicolor</i>	C
	Smooth-billed Ani <i>Crotophaga ani</i>	O		Greater Antillean Grackle <i>Quiscalus niger</i>	F
Caprimulgidae				Black-cowled Oriole <i>Icterus dominicensis</i>	F
	Antillean Nighthawk <i>Chordeiles gundlachi</i>	O		Yellow-shouldered Blackbird <i>Agelaius xanthomus</i>	R
Trochilidae			Estrildidae		
	Puerto Rican Emerald <i>Chlorostilbon maugaeus</i>	O		Nutmeg Mannikin <i>Lonchura punctulata</i>	O
	Antillean Mango <i>Anthracothorax dominicus</i>	O			
	Green Mango <i>Anthracothorax viridis</i>	F			
Todidae					
	Puerto Rican Tody <i>Todus mexicanus</i>	O			

¹C=common, likely to be seen more than once per day; F=fairly common, seen on a regular basis, possibly daily; O=occasional, seen several times, but not predictably; R=rare, seen once.

the interior of Puerto Rico (Pérez Rivera, pers. comm.). We occasionally saw large flocks of this bird are on Magueyes Island off La Parguera, in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

Magnificent Frigatebird *Fregata magnificens* — We observed an adult Magnificent Frigatebird soaring over Guamá, Puerto Rico (12 km from the coast), on 4 July 1993, for 20 min. beginning at 15:15. Biggi (1997) noted that frigatebirds are occasionally reported from the interior of Puerto Rico, possibly crossing from coast to coast. We have not seen this bird in Guamá, or this far inland, in our 25 years of residence. Raffaele *et al.* (1998) suggested that frigatebirds will penetrate well inland during storms, but our observation was not during stormy weather.

Yellow-shouldered Blackbird (*Agelaius xantho-*

mus) — In the past, blackbirds occurred, though rarely, in the interior of Puerto (Pérez-Rivera, pers. Comm.) More recently, and when our observations of the blackbird in Guamá were made, most of the few remaining specimens of this increasing endangered endemic are found on the southwestern coast of Puerto Rico and Mona Island (Raffaele *et al.* 1998).

Red-legged Thrush *Turdus plumbeus* — The thrush appears to be very rare in Guamá, where the Pearly-eyed Thrasher (*Margarops fuscatus*) dominates. At slightly higher elevations nearby, the Red-legged Thrush appears to replace the Pearly-eyed Thrasher. We do not know why the Red-legged Thrush is more successful at higher altitudes. It could be due to the denser vegetation and more com-

plex habitats there. In lower, more exposed areas, the aggressive behavior of the Pearly-eyed Thrasher apparently allows it to dominate.

We thank Dr. David L. Ballantine, Department of Marine Sciences, University of Puerto Rico, and Dr. Paul J. Bartels, Department of Biological Sciences, Warren Wilson College, for additional observations of the Orange-fronted Parakeet; and Raúl A. Pérez-Rivera for additional information and for reviewing the manuscript.

LITERATURE CITED

- BIAGGI, V. 1997. *Las aves de Puerto Rico*, 4th Ed, Editorial de la Universidad de Puerto Rico, San Juan, Puerto Rico.
- NORTON, R. L. 1998. West Indies/Bermuda *in*. 98th Christmas Bird Count (G. S. LeBaron, ed.) *American Birds*, pg. 599.
- RAFFAELE, H. A. 1989. *A guide to the birds of Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands*, 2nd ed. Princeton Univ. Press, Princeton, New Jersey.
- RAFFAELE, H., J. WILEY, O. GARRIDO, A. KEITH, AND J. RAFFAELE. 1998. *A guide to the birds of the West Indies*. Princeton Univ. Press, Princeton, New Jersey.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR LATIN AMERICAN FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS TO ATTEND AN ADVANCED TRAINING PROGRAM IN CANADA

Bird Studies Canada/Long Point Bird Observatory is offering a 1-month course in advanced field techniques pertaining to songbirds (mist-netting, bird banding, ageing and sexing, point counts, migration monitoring, database management etc.). All training will occur at Long Point, located on the north shore of Lake Erie. This course will be ideal for talented Latin American field biologists/technicians who already have an excellent background in field ornithology and who are seriously interested in upgrading their skills. This course is not suitable for beginners. A good working ability in English is essential. Institutions and agencies in Latin America (especially Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean) are encouraged to recommend potential candidates. This month-long training course is being offered to a maximum of 3 qualified applicants during September 2000. Air travel, field accommodation, food and instruction are provided Bird Studies Canada. Bird Studies Canada and the Canadian Nature Federation are Canadian joint partners in BirdLife International.

For information and applications, contact JUL WOJNOWSKI, Bird Studies Canada, PO Box 160, Port Rowan, Ontario, Canada N0E 1M0 (E-mail: <lpbo@bsc-eoc.org>; Phone: 519-586-3531; Fax: 519-586-3532); or visit our web site: <<http://www.bsc-eoc.org>>.

Applications must be received by 10 April 2000.