

Two bird species new for Panama and Central America: White-whiskered Hermit *Phaethornis yaruqui* and White-winged Swallow *Tachycineta albiventer*

Gilles Seutin

En base a observaciones efectuadas en julio de 1996, se describen dos especies nuevas para Panamá y América Central—*Phaethornis yaruqui* y *Tachycineta albiventer*. Ambas observaciones fueron hechas en las tierras bajas de Darién, un área poco relevada por los ornitólogos. Se presentan además las observaciones de otras ocho especies que actualizan el conocimiento de la avifauna de la zona.

Introduction

The avifauna of Panama is well-known by Neotropical ornithological standards. This is the result of extensive fieldwork by a small number of ornithologists, most importantly Eisenmann¹ and Wetmore^{10,11}, and more recently amateurs encouraged by the publication of Ridgely's field guides^{5,6}. Still, some regions of the country have been relatively poorly explored, including the Darién province in the east. Ornithologists and birdwatchers visiting this region in recent years have mainly focused their attention on the foothills and highlands^{4,8,9}, and in particular the Cana area in the Serranía de Pirre (Fig. 1). Comparatively little attention has been paid to the lowland avifauna, and this usually by observers in transit

to Cana. Thus, efforts in the lowlands have been essentially concentrated in the direct vicinity of the village of El Real, and along the trail that leads from Boca de Cupe to Cana (Fig. 1). Here I report on two bird species new for Panama observed in the Darién lowlands in July 1996: White-winged Swallow *Tachycineta albiventer* and White-whiskered Hermit *Phaethornis yaruqui*. The upper two-thirds of the Balsas River drainage, where I found the hermit, had apparently never been explored before by ornithologists or zoologists (*vide* G. Angehr, Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute). Therefore, I provide a list of the most interesting species that I observed there on 6–13 July 1996.

White-whiskered Hermit

Phaethornis yaruqui

The bird was observed at Manené (07°41'N 77°49'W; c.100 m asl) on 10 July 1996 along a trail through mature forest. It hovered briefly at a flower c.5 m away from me, before coming to within 1.5 m and 'confronting' me at eye-level for about 3 seconds and then dashing off into the forest. It was a dark hermit, similar in size and shape to the Green Hermit *P. guy* that is common in the Darién foothills and highlands above 600 m⁶. The relatively short central tail feathers suggested a male. Compared to a typical male *P. guy*, the tail appeared shorter, the breast and belly were darker and greener, and the pale 'tie' on the throat and upper breast was light grey and narrower than the buff stripe of *P. guy*. I could not distinguish the coppery crown mentioned by Hilty & Brown³ as being diagnostic of *P. yaruqui*. Nevertheless, the combination of characters that I noticed identifies the bird as *P. yaruqui*, and the record was accepted by the Scientific Committee of the Panama Audubon Society². *P. yaruqui* is the most common *Phaethornis* hermit in the Pacific lowlands of Colombia where it replaces the

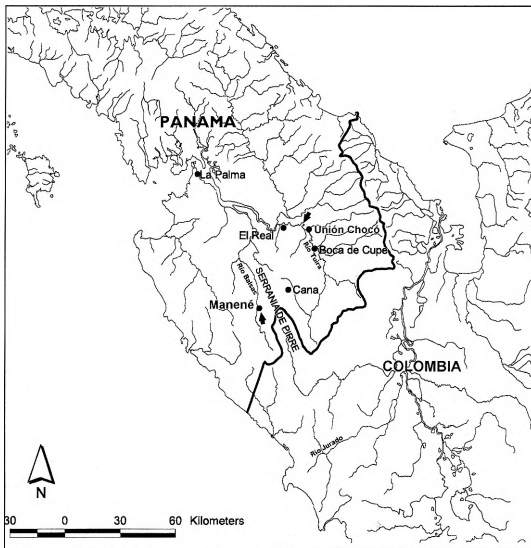


Figure 1. The Darién region of Panama, showing villages, rivers and landmarks mentioned in the text. The arrows indicate where the two species new for Panama were observed.

foothill and highlands *P. guy*³. It is found north to the lower Atrato Valley³, or c. 50 km from the Panamanian border and 75 km from Manené. Considering that the ridge between the basins of the Balsas River in Panama and the Juradó River in Colombia is below 200 m altitude at its lowest point, the occurrence of *P. yaruqui* in Panama was not unexpected.

White-winged Swallow

Tachycineta albiventer

While on the Tuirá River, downstream of Unión Chocó (08°08'N 77°37'W; c.30 m asl) on 6 July 1996, I spotted three *Tachycineta*-type swallows perched on a log in the river. From a distance of c.50 m, I noticed pale wing patches on the two individuals that were facing away. The three birds took flight as the boat approached to within 20 m, revealing very conspicuous white wing patches encompassing the secondaries and their coverts, and a white rump. This combination of plumage traits is diagnostic of *T. albiventer*. This taxon and the resident Mangrove Swallow *T. albilinea* also differ in the colour of the supraloral stripe, which I did not record. Ridgely & Gwynne⁶ mentioned that *T. albiventer* could be expected in eastern Panama as it breeds in north-west Colombia^{3,7}.



White-winged Swallow *Tachycineta albiventer* (David Beadle)

Other bird species of the Manené region

All records below are from the immediate vicinity of Manené in July 1996, unless stated otherwise. Several birds were recorded below their normal altitudinal range as reported by Ridgely & Gwynne⁶; this probably simply reflects how little the local avifauna is known.

Plumbeous Kite *Ictinia plumbea* (one pair feeding 1 fledgling; 10–12 July).

Laughing Falcon *Herpetotheres cachinnans* (one at the Darién National Park Station, 08°52'N 77°51'W; 6 July).

Yellow-crowned Parrot *Amazona ochrocephala* (one bird in a flock of Blue-headed Parrots *Pionus menstruus*, 13 July).

Cinereous Becard *Pachyramphus rufus* (a pair at the Darién National Park Station; 6 July).

Slate-throated Gnatcatcher *Polioptila schistaceigula* (two and one individuals in different mixed flocks; c.200 m asl; 11 July).

Purple Honeycreeper *Cyanerpes caeruleus* (a pair with a fledgling; c.150 m asl; 10 July).

Orange-bellied Euphonia *Euphonia xanthogaster* (several individuals in mixed flocks; 150–250 m asl; 11 July).

Tawny-crested Tanager *Tachyphonus delatrii* (several in mixed flocks; 100–200 m asl; 8–12 July).

Acknowledgements

I thank the Emberá residents of Manené, and especially the Cansari family, for hosting me and guiding me on their land. Dr C. Potvin provided logistical support for the trip.

References

- Eisenmann, E. (1955) The species of Middle American birds. *Trans. Linn. Soc. New York* 7: 1–128.
- Engleman, D. (1997) The field editor's report. *El Tucan* 23 (3): 4–6.
- Hilty, S. L. & Brown, W. L. (1986) *A guide to the birds of Colombia*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
- Panama Audubon Society (1985–1997) *El Tucan* Vols. 11–23.
- Ridgely, R. S. (1976) *A guide to the birds of Panama*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
- Ridgely, R. S. & Gwynne, J. A. (1989) *A guide to the birds of Panama*. Second edition. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
- Ridgely, R. S. & Tudor, G. (1989) *The birds of South America*, 1. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Robbins, M. B., Parker, T. A. & Allen, S. E. (1985) The avifauna of Cerro Pirre, Darién, eastern Panama. *Ornithol. Monogr.* 36: 198–232.
- Wege, D. C. (1996) Threatened birds of the Darién highlands, Panama: a reassessment. *Bird Conserv. International* 6: 175–179.
- Wetmore, A. (1965–1973) *The birds of the Republic of Panamá*, 1–3. Smithsonian Misc. Coll. 150.
- Wetmore, A., Pasquier, R. F. & Olson, S. L. (1984) *The birds of the Republic of Panamá*, 4. Smithsonian Misc. Coll. 150.

Gilles Seutin

Department of Geography, McGill University, 805 Sherbrooke W., Montreal, Quebec, H3A 2K6, Canada.