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

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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 Eisenmann\(^1\) 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 (fide 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 m\(^6\). 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 & Brown\(^1\) 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 Society\(^2\). *P. yaruqui* is the most common *Phaethornis* hermit in the Pacific lowlands of Colombia where it replaces the
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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).

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References


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