

## Cayenne Nightjar *Caprimulgus maculosus* rediscovered?

Johan Ingels and Vincent Pelletier

Cotinga 16 (2001): 46–47

El 24 de abril de 1917, Klages colectó un Chotacabras en el Saut Tamanoir del Río Mana (Guayana Francesa), el cual resultó ser un macho de una especie desconocida. Todd<sup>4</sup> lo describió como el Chotacabras Guayanés *Nyctipolus* (después *Caprimulgus*) *maculosus*. En la noche del 12 de Septiembre de 1982, Dujardin deslumbró con una antorcha, y atrapó con la mano un Chotacabras en la carretera entre la aldea y el aeropuerto de Saül (Guayana Francesa). Este examinó el pájaro y después lo dejó libre, posteriormente lo refirió como una hembra del Chotacabras Guayanés. El 20 de noviembre de 1999 durante su estadía en Saül, JI visitó un pequeño baldío a lo largo de un camino local conocido como 'Circuit des Monts La Fumée' en donde por unos encontró dos Chotacabras descansando, los mismos habían sido vistos por VP un mes antes. JI observó los pájaros por unos 15 minutos, usando binoculares y tomó una diapositiva (borrosa) de uno de los pájaros. Estos eran del mismo tamaño de un Chotacabras Negruzco *C. nigrescens* y parecían 'una forma café' de esa especie. Nosotros, los dos estamos convencidos que estas observaciones probablemente son del Chotacabras Guayanés.

### Introduction

On 24 April 1917, Samuel M. Klages collected a nightjar at the Saut Tamanoir (05°09'N 53°45'W) on the Mana River, c.10 km above its confluence with the Cockioco (Kokioko) River, French Guiana. It proved to be a male of an unknown species. Todd<sup>4</sup> described it as the Cayenne Nightjar *Nyctipolus* (later *Caprimulgus*) *maculosus*. The type-specimen (CMNH 60854) now resides in the Carnegie Museum of Natural History collection (Pittsburgh, USA).

In the evening of 12 September 1982, Jean-Luc Dujardin (pers. comm. 1986) dazzled, with a torch, and caught by hand (not mist-netted, as stated in Collar *et al.*<sup>2</sup>) a nightjar on the road between the village and airport at Saül (03°35'N 53°12'W). No facilities for specimen preparation were available, so it was released after examination. Although originally considered to be a male Blackish Nightjar *Caprimulgus nigrescens* with an aberrant pattern of yellowish-white and yellowish-brown wing and tail patches, Dujardin subsequently referred to this bird as having been a female *C. maculosus*<sup>2</sup>.

The validity of the taxon has been previously discussed<sup>2</sup>, but no formal or clearly argued cases against its validity have been presented and therefore *C. maculosus* is still considered a valid species<sup>1</sup> most closely related to *C. nigrescens*.

### Ecology

Klages did not record the habitat in which the type-specimen of *C. maculosus* was collected. The Mana River, with its many boulder-strewn rapids, is typical of watercourses on the Guianan plateau. Two habitat types occur along such rivers: an open habitat along the river itself, and nearby forest. Open areas consist of large boulders, sand banks, sandy or stony river banks and (rare) open, savanna-like

areas on these banks. Forest is typically closed-canopy in nature but with tree-fall openings and small (man-made?) clearings.

The small village of Saül, in the interior of French Guiana, is entirely surrounded by mature rain forest. However, a small area around the village has been largely modified by human activities (agriculture, airstrip, clearings, etc.). In the past, a system of trails was developed for scientific studies of the local fauna and flora; and these are now used by ecotourists to explore the surrounding rain forest.

At Saül, there are also two types of habitat: an open area of roads, clearings, agricultural areas and plantations around the village; and forest comprising rain forest with tree-falls, small clearings along trails and rocky granitic outcrops (inselbergs).

### Observations

In October 1999, VP found two nightjars roosting in a small man-made clearing below a viewpoint along the trail known as 'Circuit des Monts La Fumée', which is c. 1 hour's walk from Saül and is entirely surrounded by rain forest. They were roosting on the ground and once flushed, perched crosswise on horizontal branches, but could not be identified at the time. While at Saül (5–22 November 1999), JI visited the same viewpoint on the morning of 20 November. Upon reaching the clearing, two nightjars were flushed, which perched on horizontal branches, c. 10 m away, where they were observed for c. 15 minutes, using 7 x 35 binoculars. On moving closer, the nightjars flew, disappearing into vegetation at the edge of the clearing. They were the same size as *C. nigrescens* and appeared like a 'brown morph' of that species. A rather blurred slide of one shows white in both the tail and wing.

### Identification

With the exception of *C. maculosus*, only two small (c.20 cm) nightjars occur in French Guiana: *C. nigrescens* and Spot-tailed Nightjar *C. maculicaudus*. The latter occurs in savanna and grassland with scattered low trees and thickets, bushy pastures, open marshy places, clearings, second growth and along woodland edges<sup>1</sup>. In French Guiana it is only known from the coast, e.g. in marshes near Mana and Kaw<sup>5,6</sup>. More importantly, the two nightjars we saw lacked the broad triangular malar stripe and tawny collar on the hindneck, clearly visible in the colour photo of a *C. maculicaudus* on p.304 of del Hoyo *et al.*<sup>3</sup>. Finally, one (the male?) had white tips to its tail and white patches in the wing, clearly visible when perched. Male *C. maculicaudus* has no white in the wing<sup>1</sup>. The white markings were very obvious when it flew. The other (female?) had no white markings in tail or wings.

*C. nigrescens* is widespread in Amazonia. It prefers open habitats and is common on sandy, gravel and stony roads, on rocky or sandy islands and other open areas by rivers, and in large openings within forests, including rocky granitic outcrops (inselbergs). It occurs at both Saut Tamanoir and around Saül.

In 1917, Klages collected two *C. nigrescens* (CMNH 61919 and 62254) at Saut Tamanoir, as well as *C. maculosus*. However, it does not follow that both occurred in the same habitat. At Saül, *C. nigrescens* is common around the airport and on the road between there and the village, where JI found it breeding. The most prominent differences in coloration between *C. maculosus* and *C. nigrescens* are the broad blackish-brown streaks on the forehead, crown and nape, and narrow, indistinct tawny collar of *C. maculosus*, which *C. nigrescens* lacks completely. The white patches on either side of the throat are larger in *C. maculosus* than in *C. nigrescens*<sup>1</sup>. These differences were difficult to observe in the field, but are obvious in specimens or live birds examined in the hand. From personal experience with *C. nigrescens*, both in museums and the field, JI considers that the extent of the white throat patch depends largely on the skin's preparation, or in a live bird, its posture and movement (roosting, incubating, excited). Nevertheless, we are both satisfied that our observations (at Monts La Fumée) do not relate to *C. nigrescens*, and probably

involved *C. maculosus*. Presumably the same pair was involved, as the observations were only c.1 month apart. Typical habitat for this species may therefore consist of small openings, i.e. tree-falls and clearings, within rain forest.

### Conclusion

Separation in the field of *C. maculosus* and *C. nigrescens* is extremely difficult, which may explain the lack of records of *C. maculosus*. To confirm the continued existence of this species around Saut Tamanoir and Saül, it is essential to acquire either specimens, or take video-recordings, photographs and feather samples.

### Acknowledgements

We thank Nigel Cleere for fruitful e-mail discussions and René Corado, Des Jackson and A. J. Mobbs for help in preparing the paper. JI is grateful to Maurice and Dany Lambelin (Kourou) for help in preparing his visit to French Guiana.

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### Johan Ingels

Galgenberglaan 9, B-9070 Destelbergen, Belgium.  
E-mail: johan.ingels@village.uunet.be.

### Vincent Pelletier

F-97314 Saül, French Guiana.