

Consumption of arboreal snails by Scaled Fruiteater *Ampelioides tschudii*

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Se realizaron tres observaciones del Frutero Escamado *Ampelioides tschudii* capturando y comiendo caracoles del género *Plekokeilus* (Bulimolidae) en el valle de Tandayapa, Pichincha, Ecuador, durante enero y febrero de 2000. Hasta ahora no se habían registrado caracoles como parte de la dieta del Frutero Escamado.

On three occasions in January–February 2000 Scaled Fruiteaters *Ampelioides tschudii* were observed eating arboreal snails in Tandayapa Valley, Pichincha, Ecuador. On 9 January I observed and photographed an adult female within a mixed-species flock, manipulating and consuming an arboreal snail of the genus *Plekokeilus* (Bulimolidae). Subsequently, on 21 February together with David Michaels, I witnessed an adult male catch and consume a member of the same genus, and on 29 February Iain Campbell (with Glen Ingram) reported another female manipulating and consuming a *Plekokeilus* sp.

On each occasion the snail was treated similarly, the fruiteater holding it at the apex and repeatedly beating it on a branch, in the manner of a bee-eater *Merops* spp. removing the sting from a bee. This action appeared to be effective in removing the outer lip of the aperture of the shell, which is relatively pronounced in this genus. The calcareous shell remained at the apex of the snail, which was then swallowed whole. The male observed on 21 February was seen to catch the snail by sallying upwards from a horizontal branch and removing it from the underside of a higher branch adjacent to the trunk.

Initial investigations in the Tandayapa area have found only two species of snail, the arboreal *Plekokeilus* sp. and a large terrestrial form in the family Pleurodontidae (R. Furniss pers. comm.). Snails have not previously been reported in the species' diet, which predominantly consists of insects and fruit¹.

Acknowledgements

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References

1. Ridgely, R. S. & Tudor, G. (1994) *The birds of South America*, 2. Austin: University of Texas Press.

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Figure 1. Female Scaled Fruiteater *Ampelioides tschudii* eating an arboreal snail of the genus *Plekokeilus* (Bulimolidae), Tandayapa Valley, Pichincha, Ecuador, 9 January 2000 (Robert S. R. Williams)