

The nest and eggs of Blue-and-black Tanager *Tangara vassorii*

Blue-and-black Tanager *Tangara vassorii* inhabits subtropical to temperate forests in the Andes from Venezuela to Bolivia^{3,4,6} and is one of c.45 species in the genus⁵. Despite its large geographical range and relative abundance, little has been published on the species' breeding biology. Hilty & Brown³ mentioned nests and fledglings from Colombia but provided no details and the only Ecuadorian data involve fledglings in September in the north-west⁷. Here we provide the first description of the species' nest and eggs based on two nests found in Napo province, north-east Ecuador.

We found the first nest near Yanayacu Biological Station & Center for Creative Studies (00°35.9'S 77°53.4'W) at 2,200 m. On 10 June 2008, at 17h30, we flushed an adult from a nest containing two eggs. Both were very pale blue with cinnamon blotches and speckling, heaviest at the larger end (Fig. 1). They measured 20.2 × 14.1 and 20.3 × 14.5 mm, and weighed 2.1 and 2.2 g, respectively. When we returned on 18 June we again flushed an adult from the nest, which still held two eggs, but on 23 June it was empty. The nest was 5 m above ground and supported by multiple upright forks of a small *Alchornea* sp. (Euphorbiaceae) tree. The cup-shaped nest comprised a thin outer 'shell' of moss and interwoven rootlets densely lined with dried *Chusquea* sp. bamboo leaves. Inside was a sparse lining of pale fibres and a few dark animal hairs (Fig. 1). The nest was 8 cm wide by 7 cm tall externally and 6 cm wide by 3.5 cm deep internally. The nest tree was located in a cattle pasture which had lain fallow for one year and was in the early stages of re-growth.

We discovered the second nest at Termas Papallacta (00°36.3'S 78°15.0'W) at 3,350 m on 24 May 2009. The nest was similar in form and sited 3.8 m up in a 5.0-m tall tree overhanging a small river. It contained two eggs which both measured 20.0 × 15.0 mm and



Figure 1. Complete clutch of Blue-and-black Tanager *Tangara vassorii*, prov. Napo, Ecuador, 10 June 2008 (Jose Simbaña)



Figure 2. Nest of Blue-and-black Tanager *Tangara vassorii*, prov. Napo, Ecuador, 10 June 2008 (Jose Simbaña)

were similar in appearance to those described at the first nest. We were unable to gather further data at this nest.

While there are partial nest descriptions and data available concerning various aspects of reproduction for many species of *Tangara*¹⁻⁴, relatively few detailed descriptions of nests have been published. Detailed nest descriptions are needed if nest architecture is to be used for testing phylogenetic hypotheses⁸ and we encourage others to publish further information for this and other Neotropical species.

Acknowledgements

Field Guides Inc., John V. & the late Ruth Ann Moore, Matt Kaplan, the PBNHS, and the Population Biology Foundation continue to support our field studies. This is publication no. 210 of the Yanayacu Natural History Research Group.

References

1. Arcos-Torres, A. & Solano-Ugalde, A. (2007) Notas sobre la anidación de tres especies del género *Tangara* (Thraupidae: Aves) en el

noroccidente de Ecuador. *Bol. Soc. Antioqueña Orn.* 17: 133–137.

2. Greeney, H. F., Freeman, B., Sheldon, K. S., Dobbs, R. C. & Gelis, R. A. (2008) Notes on the nest architecture and nesting biology of Black-capped Tanager (*Tangara heinei*) in eastern Ecuador. *Bol. Soc. Antioqueña Orn.* 18: 10–15.
3. Hilty, S. L. & Brown W. L. (1986) *A guide to the birds of Colombia*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
4. Isler, M. L. & Isler, P. R. (1999) *The tanagers: natural history, distribution, and identification*. Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution Press.
5. Remsen, J. V., Cadena, C. D., Jaramillo, A., Nores, M., Pacheco, J. F., Robbins, M. B., Schulenberg, T. S., Stiles, F. G., Stotz, D. F. & Zimmer, K. J. (2010) A classification of the bird species of South America. www.museum.lsu.edu/~Remsen/SACCBaseline.html (version 15 January 2010).
6. Ridgley, R. S. & Greenfield P. J. (2001) *The birds of Ecuador*, 1. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
7. Solano-Ugalde, A., Arcos-Torres, A. & Greeney, H. F. (2007) Additional breeding records for selected avian species in northwest Ecuador. *Bol. Soc. Antioqueña Orn.* 17: 17–25.
8. Zyskowski, K. & Prum, R. O. (1999) Phylogenetic analysis of the nest architecture of Neotropical ovenbirds (Furnariidae). *Auk* 116: 891–911.

Harold F. Greeney, Jose Simbaña and Rudy A. Gelis

Yanayacu Biological Station & Center for Creative Studies, Cosanga, Napo, Ecuador; c/o 721 Foch y Amazonas, Quito, Ecuador. E-mail: revmmoss@yahoo.com.

Received 18 January 2010; final revision accepted 12 September 2010 (published online 16 March 2011)