

A nest of Long-tailed Woodcreeper *Deconychura longicauda* in western Panama

Long-tailed Woodcreeper *Deconychura longicauda* is a medium-sized Dendrocolaptidae that is uncommon to rare throughout its extensive range from Honduras to southern Amazonia. Currently seven subspecies are recognised. However, three of these—a group comprising *typica* (Honduras to central Panama), *darienensis* (eastern Panama) and *minor* (north-central Colombia)—were formerly¹ treated as a separate species. Furthermore, Marantz *et al.*² indicated that vocal differences between populations suggest that more than one species might be involved, with the *typica* group possibly more closely related to Spot-throated Woodcreeper *D. stictolaema* than to the Amazonian races of Long-tailed Woodcreeper.

Despite the large range, only one nest of Long-tailed Woodcreeper has ever been found². It was discovered by G. K. Cherrie in Costa Rica in 1893 and was 'located in a dead trunk about 9 meters from the ground. The nest was placed in a cavity that opened at the top of the stub, and was a little less than a meter deep. The bottom was lined with dry leaves ... The two eggs were described as glossy white ... measured 21.8×17 mm³. Both that and the following record pertain to *D. l. typica*.

New nesting record

In March 2014, we made our annual dry-season visit to the Panama Audubon Society's reserve (183 ha) in El Chorogo, Chiriquí prov., in westernmost Panama on the border with Costa Rica. It is located in a somewhat remote and rugged area of the Burica Peninsula that divides the Golfo de Chiriquí, in Panama, from the Golfo Dulce in Costa Rica. El Chorogo comprises a remnant (c.1,000 ha) of lowland forest that once covered the entire Burica and much of the Pacific slope of western Panama. Several nationally endangered



Figure 1. Decaying stump with arrow showing location of Long-tailed Woodcreeper *Deconychura longicauda* nest entrance, El Chorogo, Chiriquí prov., Panama, 3 March 2014 (W. J. Adsett)

species and subspecies still occur there, whereas over the rest of Panama they have largely or wholly disappeared. Long-tailed Woodcreeper is uncommon in the area, occasionally being seen in midstorey mixed flocks.

While walking the border trail between Panama and Costa Rica on the morning of 3 March 2014, we saw a bird fly low in front of us. In the afternoon of the same day we returned and the bird flew out of the same dead stump. We identified it as Long-tailed Woodcreeper and close examination of the stump revealed a nest.

The nest (Figs. 1–3) was in primary forest at 08°17.172'N 82°59.966'W (618 m), just within Panama. The well-decayed stump was 150 cm high with a diameter of 27 cm. The entrance (which faced south-east) and at least part of the nest chamber were clearly natural in origin, while the presence of some small soft wood chips below the nest indicated that the chamber had been enlarged. The entrance hole was 55 cm above the base of the stump, with a height of 13 cm and width of 3.8 cm. It, like the nest cavity behind



Figure 2. Entrance to Long-tailed Woodcreeper *Deconychura longicauda* nest; note fresh wood flakes scattered below indicating the birds had enlarged the interior of the nest, El Chorogo, Chiriquí prov., Panama, 3 March 2014 (W. J. Adsett)

it, was very irregularly shaped. Approximately 20 cm from the entrance two white eggs were just visible. There was also a second opening at the back of the trunk—behind the eggs—but it was much too small to have permitted the birds to enter.

Next day (4 March 2014) we returned to the area twice and no bird was present. In the afternoon we set up a video camera. Within a few minutes, an adult Long-tailed Woodcreeper arrived at the base of the trunk carrying an insect in its bill. It ascended the trunk to the level of the nest, hesitated, probably saw us, climbed to the back of the trunk and flew off. The video can be seen at <http://ibc.lynxeds.com/video/long-tailed-woodcreeper-deconychura-longicauda/adult-lands-decaying-trunk-next-nest-hole-food->.

Due to flat batteries, we had no means of illuminating inside the nest, so we could not ascertain whether an egg had hatched—although this is the probable explanation for the adult's behaviour. We had to leave the area next morning, so were unable to make additional observations



Figure 3. Interior of Long-tailed Woodcreeper *Deonychura longicauda* nest, with one white egg clearly visible, and a second one just below it to the right; small hole, probably natural in origin, visible in rear wall of cavity, El Chorogo, Chiriquí prov., Panama, 3 March 2014 (W. J. Adsett)

This is only the second nest of Long-tailed Woodcreeper to be described and the first in >100 years (as well as the first in Panama). The first nest was also in a natural cavity in a dead trunk, but was sited much higher

and was deeper inside the trunk than that we discovered.

Acknowledgements

We thank the Quiroz family of San Bartolo Arriba, Puerto Armuelles, for preserving the forest where the

nest was located, bordering the Panama Audubon Reserve, and for permitting us to observe birds on their land. We thank our guide, Armando Quiroz, who is caretaker of the reserve. We also thank the Amos W. Butler Audubon Society of Indianapolis who, via the American Bird Conservancy, made possible the purchase of the Panama Audubon El Chorogo Reserve for conservation.

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Received 2 June 2014; final revision accepted 18 December 2014; published online 10 March 2015