

Common Potoo
Nyctibius griseus



Common Potoo *Nyctibius griseus* is widespread in southern Central America and throughout northern and central South America, from eastern Nicaragua south to northern Argentina.

In Ecuador it is considered uncommon to fairly common in the lowlands and quite widespread in the east occurring in *várzea* and riparian forest as well as the borders of *terra firme* forest³.

In late December 2001 we spent ten days at Yuturi Lodge, on the río Yuturi, a tributary of the río Napo in eastern Ecuador (00°33'S 76°05'W)³. On 22 December we left the lodge at 05h30 for the Manduro trail where, on our approach to the

riverbank, a Common Potoo was encountered in a typically upright position atop a spiny-covered stump projecting out of the water. It soon became apparent that the bird was perched with both its tail and tips of its longest primaries partially submerged in the water. We speculated that perhaps the bird perched thus in an attempt to remain cool during the heat of the day. Despite our close approach the bird did not perform a defence display¹ or leave the stump. We spent the next ten hours along the Manduro trail but on our return we found the potoo had left the stump, presumably to hunt. To our surprise a single egg was visible where the bird had been perched.

Water levels in this area vary considerably in response to rainfall and, on reflection, it seems probable that the water level rose after the nest site had been chosen, rendering the bird a choice between continuing to incubate whilst partially submerged or desert the nest. The availability of nest sites may be a limiting factor in potoo population density and good-quality sites are perhaps hard to find². It is therefore interesting that the present site was the result of vegetation having been cut by a machete to maintain the



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Figures 1–2. Common Potoo *Nyctibius g. griseus* incubating whilst partially submerged, río Yuturi, Ecuador, 22 December 2001 (David Cooper/Brenda Kay)

Figure 3. Egg of Common Potoo *Nyctibius g. griseus*, río Yuturi, Ecuador, 22 December 2001 (David Cooper/Brenda Kay)

channel leading to the trail. Thus, the lack of a more typical nest site nearby, at mid-height in a tree², may have resulted in this potoo's choice.

Acknowledgements

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References

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