Yellow Warbler *Dendroica petechia cruciana* successfully nesting in a man-made, disturbed location

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Se describe el hallazgo de un anidaje exitoso de la Reinita Amarilla *Dendroica petechia cruciana* en un ambiente creado por el hombre. Se observó y documenta fotográficamente el comportamiento de anidaje para esta especie. Se establece una hipótesis para explicar la selección de este ambiente para anidar.

On 12 June 2002 I discovered an active nest of Yellow Warbler *Dendroica petechia cruciana* within an exotic *Ficus nekbuda* planted in a clay pot next to the swimming pool of a hotel adjacent to Cabo Rojo National Wildlife Refuge (CRNWR) in south-west Puerto Rico. I estimate the total area of the hotel grounds to be 0.2 ha, but the area where the warblers nested and foraged for food was approximately half

that size. All of the trees and shrubs were artificially planted as part of the hotel's landscaping. The pool area is highly disturbed both by personnel and noisy guests. Therefore, I was intrigued to determine whether this breeding attempt would be successful or not.

The nest was located c.2.1 m above ground in a fork of the *Ficus*, approximately 2 m from the pool area. The predilection of Yellow Warblers to breed near water probably influenced their nest-site selection. The nest consisted of a deep cup of plant fibres, down and strips of bark. The exterior was covered with plant down and fine fibres, giving it a cotton-like appearance. The inside of the cup was lined with fine fibres, down and feathers, i.e. consistent with descriptions in the literature[1].

I observed breeding behaviour over the next few days by visiting the area intermittently and documenting progress photographically. Two eggs were laid the day after the nest's discovery. Incubation was performed by the female alone, which left the nest for periods of c.20 minutes to feed. I never observed the male bring food to the incubating female. However, I frequently heard the male vocalising, probably protecting the territory from other males. After an incubation period of 11–12 days the altricial young hatched synchronously. Both parents fed the young at c.20-minute intervals. I never saw the parents forage outside the wooded area of the hotel, as evidently there was sufficient food in nearby trees. The female removed the nestlings' faecal sacs and frequently re-adjusted the nest material, maintaining the integrity of its structure. The fledglings left the nest c.2 weeks later.

Shiny Cowbird *Molothrus bonariensis* parasitism of Yellow Warblers is a serious problem in Puerto Rico with up to 76% of nests being parasitised[2]. The absence of parasitism here is probably the result of a successful active cowbird control programme in the nearby CRNWR as part of an initiative to re-establish the Yellow-shouldered Blackbird *Agelaius xanthomus* population. Another possible and interesting explanation would be that by nesting in the artificial environment the Yellow Warblers avoided cowbird parasitism as an adaptive behaviour.

Successful nesting in a man-made and disturbed locality is sure indication of this species' adaptability to changing environmental conditions and helps explain why its breeding range is the most widespread of the parulids.

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References

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