The nest and eggs of Red-winged Wood-rail *Aramides calopterus* in the foothills of north-east Ecuador

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En la reserva de la comunidad de Mushullacta, que se encuentra dentro de la zona de amortiguamiento del Parque Nacional Sumaco-Galeras, a 1.175 msnm encontramos un nido de *Aramides calopterus* con tres huevos de color crema con manchas de color café y violeta claro. El nido se encontró entre dos pequeñas laderas con un pantano permanente y descansaba entre dos árboles con raíces zancudas; una palmera (*Iriatea deltoidea*) y otro árbol no identificado. Estimamos que el periodo de incubación seria de 24 días.

Figure 1. Adult Red-winged Wood-rail *Aramides calopterus* incubating three eggs, Mushullacta community reserve, Napo, Ecuador, 5 April 2005 (Murray Cooper)

Figure 2. Nest and complete clutch of Red-winged Wood-rail *Aramides calopterus* Mushullacta community reserve, Napo, Ecuador, 4 April 2005 (Harold F. Greeney)

The genus *Aramides* numbers seven medium to large rails (the wood-rails[4]). The genus is largely confined to South America, with only two species reaching Central America. Several are extremely poorly known and one (Brown Wood-rail *A. wolfi*) is considered Vulnerable[1]. One of the least known, Red-winged Wood-rail *A. calopterus*, has a peculiar distribution, with apparently disjunct populations in the eastern foothills and lowlands of Ecuador, north-central and south-east Peru, and Amazonian

Brazil[4]. Nothing has been published concerning its natural history, even the voice being unknown.

Here we present data on the nest and eggs of *A. calopterus* from the foothills of north-east Ecuador. In April 2005, we made observations at 1,175 m elevation at a campsite (00º22'S 78º08'W) within a community-owned reserve, Mushullacta, Napo province, Ecuador, adjacent to Napo-Galeras National Park. For additional images of the nest, eggs and adults see Greeney[2].

Nest

The nest was discovered on 3 April 2005, at 18h15, when an adult was flushed and a nest with three eggs discovered. The nest was a shallow cup of dead leaves and sticks, supported at 1.1 m by the converging root masses of two small (25-cm dbh) trees; *Iriartea deltoidea* Palmae and an unknown dicot (Fig. 1). The nest was loosely constructed, with material seemingly piled into the niche provided by the roots. It measured roughly 22–25 cm in diameter and 13–14 cm tall outside. The cup was unlined and measured c.15 cm in diameter by 6 cm deep.

Eggs

The eggs were off-white to beige with dense splotches and spots of dark brown, red-brown and lavender (Fig. 2). At 07h30 on 4 April they measured 46.6 × 35.4 mm, 47.9 × 35.7 mm and 46.9 × 35.8 mm, and weighed 31.93, 32.87 and 32.52 g, respectively. Seven days later, at 18h00, they weighed 31.21, 31.93 and 31.71 g. This represents a mean mass-loss rate of 0.11 g/24 h or 0.34% per day. Using this mean, and an estimated incubation period of 24 days, we calculate a mean 8.2% loss of mass during incubation.

Additional observations and discussion

At 05h30 on 4 April there was no adult on the nest and the eggs were cold and wet, making us suspect that no adult spent the night at the nest. A strong light held behind the eggs revealed no visible embryonic development. We believe, therefore, that the nest was found shortly after the clutch was completed. On 27 April all three eggs hatched, giving an estimated incubation period of 24 days. Adults on the nest were often reluctant to flush, leaving only after observers approached within 1.5 m. Results of video observations made at the nest, detailing incubation rhythms and behaviours, will be reported elsewhere (RAG unpubl.).

The nest and eggs of Red-winged Wood-rail described here are similar to those reported for congeners, and the estimated incubation period of 24 days is also similar to that of other wood-rails[4]. The nest in the private Mushullacta community reserve appears to be the first confirmed report of the species' presence within a formally protected area[3]. Breeding activity at nearly 1,200 m suggests that the elevational range given by Ridgely & Greenfield[3] should be extended upwards by at least 300 m.

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