

Nest and nestling description of Grey-collared Becard *Pachyramphus major* in the highlands of Michoacán, Mexico

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El Cabezón Cuelligris *Pachyramphus major* es un tiránido que presenta dimorfismo sexual, endémico en México y el norte de Centroamérica, hasta Nicaragua. El nido fue descrito apenas recientemente⁴. Aquí presentamos los detalles de un nido descubierto en un bosque de pino-encino en agosto de 1997, el cual observamos durante un período de 10 días, antes de colectarlo una vez que el pichón lo había abandonado.

Grey-collared Becard *Pachyramphus major* is a sexually dimorphic tyrannid endemic to Mexico and northern Central America south to Nicaragua. Its nest was only recently described⁴. Furthermore, published records of this species in the highlands of Michoacán are scant.

RAG discovered a nest with nestlings on 7 August 1997 in pine–oak forest of Parque Nacional 'Insurgente José Morelos y Pavón', in the recreation area locally known as 'Kilómetro 23' (at c.2,000 m). This locality is 18 km south-east of Morelia, on Federal Highway 15, in the Temazcal region, Municipio de Morelia, Michoacán, Mexico. We observed the nest with binoculars and telescope for 10 days, on 7–31 August, for a total of 17 hours. We collected the nest on 3 September and deposited it at Universidad Michoacana de San Nicolás de Hidalgo, after the fledglings had presumably left the nest.

Description

The nest was 10 m above ground in the fork of three branches, within the dense canopy of an oak (*Quercus* sp.). It was 35 cm in height, 22 cm in depth, 23 cm in width, 56 cm in diameter, and was roughly globular (Fig. 1). The flat, slanted 'roof' was made of fine strips of bark partially fastened together with silk from cocoons (Lepidoptera). Most of the nest consisted of lichens, pine needles and twigs.

Nest activity

The male and nestlings called frequently throughout the study. The male gave a two-note *tu-tu*, a three-note *tu-tu-tu*, or a four-note *tu...tu-tu-tew*, which was used most frequently, and on occasion the male ended this easily imitated whistle with an excited twittering reminiscent of the secondary call of a breeding male Acadian Flycatcher *Empidonax virescens*. The male called near (<30 m) the nest, as well as when joining a mixed-species flock c.100–150 m away. Frequent flock participants with *P. major* were Tufted Flycatcher *Mitrephanes phaeocercus*, Bushtit *Psaltiriparus minimus*, White-breasted Nuthatch *Sitta carolinensis*, Brown Creeper *Certhia americana*, Crescent-chested War-



Figure 1. Nest of Grey-collared Becard *Pachyramphus major*.

bler *Vermivora superciliosa*, Black-and-white Warbler *Mniotilta varia*, Painted Redstart *Myioborus pictus* and Slate-throated Redstart *Myioborus miniatus*.

During 17 hours of observation, the female made 73 visits and the male 32 visits. Nineteen Lepidopteran larvae, four winged insects and one small green fruit were recognised among the food items. The nest appeared to be vacant on 31 August and on 13 September RAG observed two adults, one male fledgling and one female fledgling nearby. The female fed both fledglings, while the adult male foraged nearby and occasionally chased the male fledgling. The fledglings, like the adults, are sexually dimorphic. The female fledgling resembled the adult female except it had pale feather edgings. The

male fledgling also had pale feather-edgings and differed from its adult counterpart by its cinnamon crown.

Discussion

The structure of the becard nest—rather large, ball-shaped and composed of lichens, strips of bark, and pine needles—is similar to that of other *Pachyramphus* spp. nests described in Neotropical field guides^{2,6}. Likewise, as the nestlings were largely fed on insects by both adults, nestling food and parental feeding in Grey-collared Becard may be comparable to at least one congener of *P. major*⁵. Although *P. major* has been reported to occur in mixed-species flocks³, the birds studied in Michoacán appeared to be participating in mixed-species flocks during the nesting cycle. We feel that more fieldwork with banded individuals is required to verify such unusual behaviour.

Our discovery also provides a more current record for this species in Michoacán. The last published account for *P. major* in the highlands of Michoacán is nearly a half-century old¹.

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