
Parental care in Common Potoo *Nyctibius griseus* in Brazil

Common Potoo *Nyctibius griseus* is the most widely distributed species of Nyctibiidae, occurring almost throughout South America¹.

Despite this, few studies of the species have been published, and in Brazil the only records of its breeding biology are from the states of Rio de Janeiro², Paraná³ and Minas Gerais⁴. The most complete report of the species' nesting biology is by Skutch⁵ (based on observations in Costa Rica) which together with that by Tate⁶, made in Venezuela, were the only studies to report adults feeding their offspring.

On 15–20 October 2008, a young *N. griseus* was monitored on the campus of the Universidade Estadual de Campinas, São Paulo, Brazil, for a total of seven hours. The nestling was perched atop the



Figure 1. Nestling of Common Potoo *Nyctibius griseus* vocalising, Universidade Estadual de Campinas, São Paulo, Brazil, October 2008 (Arthur Macarrão)



Figure 2. Adult Common Potoo *Nyctibius griseus* feeding its nestling, Universidade Estadual de Campinas, São Paulo, Brazil, October 2008 (Arthur Macarrão)

broken-off branch of a tree, which was c. 4 cm in diameter, and 4.5 m above ground in front of a light standard that, during the night, illuminated the bird. The tree is just 3.6 m from the university restaurant, which is frequented by many people.

On 17 October at 20h50, after 52 minutes of observation, the nestling began to vocalise, producing a low sound, weak and husky, and moving the head sideways. Approximately two minutes later, it began to vocalise more frequently, tilting slightly forward (Fig. 1), and after a few seconds an adult landed beside it for 16 seconds, feeding the nestling after 11 seconds (Fig. 2). According to the literature, such behaviour has not previously been documented.

Skutch⁵ also reported nestlings vocalising prior to the arrival of an adult. During our observation, the movements of the nestling indicated that it was apparently listening for, observing, or predicting the arrival of the adult. Feeding of nestlings amongst *Nyctibius* spp. occurs just a few times in the night, mostly during the first hours after dusk and just before dawn, making it difficult to detect¹. Skutch⁵, however, observed 15 such events during one night, eight of them before and seven

after midnight. Lopes & Anjos³ did not observe feeding of the nestling, and they believed this was due to the proximity of the observers. However, we observed a feeding event while standing just 5 m from the birds.

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