
**The nest and egg of Cinnamon
Screech Owl *Megascops*
petersoni in central Colombia**

Cinnamon Screech Owl *Megascops petersoni* is a poorly known resident of subtropical Andean forests between 1,700 and 2,500 m³. Described from northern Peru and southern Ecuador², the species has since been found in north-central Colombia¹. There is no published information on its natural history, thus we provide the first description of the species' nest and egg.

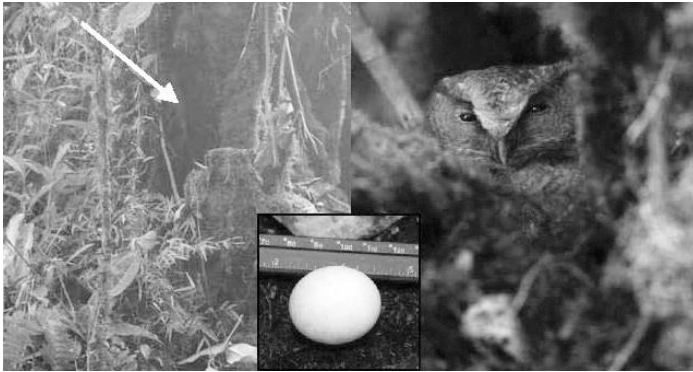


Figure 1. Nest cavity and egg of Cinnamon Screech Owl *Megascops petersoni*; the white arrow indicates the nest cavity (Murray Cooper)

The nest was discovered when an adult flushed from the nest cavity on 12 January 2009, at the Reserva Natural de Aves (RNA) Arrierito Antioqueño (06°58.709'N 75°06.937'W) at 1,826 m. The reserve is sited in the northern foothills of the Central Andes of Colombia, in north-east Antioquia². The nest was in a natural cavity of a live tree immediately adjacent to a trail, amidst dense, epiphyte-laden forest. The tree was 18 m tall with a dbh of 22 cm. The cavity was 0.7 m above the ground, the entrance c.21 cm wide and 29 cm tall, and the interior of the nest cavity 26 cm wide by 20 cm front to back and 34 cm tall. The cup was a shallow, saucer-shaped depression at the cavity's base, formed of soft spongy wood. The nest depression measured 15.8 cm wide by 13.4 cm front to back, and was 1.4 cm deep.

We first observed the single large white egg on 21 January 2009. It was stained dull reddish, presumably from the soft decaying wood, measured 35.1 mm × 29.2 mm, and was rather rounded as is typical of owl eggs³. The adult was regularly observed incubating until 22 February. On 24 February 2009 the nest contained only remnants of the egg and a small pile of adult feathers; the adult was not seen again. The cause of nest failure was unknown, although the broken egg and adult feathers indicate predation.

The nest's failure prevented us from further describing the breeding biology of Cinnamon

Screech Owl. Nonetheless, our observations reveal that the species' clutch is one egg and that incubation occupies a minimum 32 days, which is substantially longer than previously documented for *Megascops*; both Eastern Screech Owl *M. asio* and Western Screech Owl *M. kennicottii* incubate for c.26 days in North America³. Most tropical *Megascops* have average clutch sizes of 2–3, although one-egg clutches have been documented in Tropical Screech Owl *M. choliba*³.

Acknowledgement

We thank Fundación ProAves for supporting our stay at RNA Arrierito Antioqueño and for all the important conservation work they are accomplishing in the region. We also thank Harold Greeney and Guy M. Kirwan for their useful comments.

References

1. Cuervo, A. M., Pulgarin, P. C. & Calderon, D. (2008) New distributional bird data from the Cordillera Central of the Colombian Andes, with implications for the biogeography of northwestern South America. *Condor* 110: 526–537.
2. Fitzpatrick, J. W. & O'Neill, J. P. (1986) *Otus petersoni*, a new screech-owl from the eastern Andes, with systematic notes on *O. colombianus* and *O. ingens*. *Wilson Bull.* 98: 1–14.

3. Marks, J. S., Cannings, R. J. & Mikkola, H. (1999) Family Strigidae (typical owls). In: del Hoyo, J., Elliott, A. & Sargatal, J. (eds.) *Handbook of the birds of the world*, 5. Barcelona: Lynx Edicions.

Benjamin G. Freeman

8412 36 Avenue NE, Seattle, Washington, USA. E-mail: benjamin.g.freeman@gmail.com.

Carlos Julio Rojas

Reserva Natural de Aves Arrierito Antioqueño, Municipio de Anori, Colombia.

Received 13 August 2009; final revision accepted 27 October 2009 (published online 16 March 2010)