

SHORT COMMUNICATION

Nests and eggs of *Hylophylax naevia* (Gmelin, 1789) (Passeriformes: Thamnophilidae) and *Cyanocorax cyanomelas* (Vieillot, 1818) (Passeriformes: Corvidae) from Brazil

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Abstract

We describe the nests and eggs of *Hylophylax naevia* and *Cyanocorax cyanomelas* from Brazil. The nest of *H. naevia* is a deep cup, suspended by its rim from a forked branch and constructed with vegetal fibers braided with thin stems. The nest contained two pinkish-cream colored eggs, with several large, elongate dark purple blotches. The nest of *C. cyanomelas* is cup shaped, composed by many dry twigs and lined with thin vegetable fibers and roots. Their eggs are light blue, with reddish brown blotches.

Keywords: nest, eggs, *Hylophylax naevia*, Thamnophilidae, *Cyanocorax cyanomelas*, Corvidae, Brazil.

Details on the reproductive biology of the majority of Neotropical birds are still unknown (Martin, 1996) and, for many species, even their nests and eggs have not yet been described. In this paper we present the first nest record of the Spot-backed Antbird *Hylophylax naevia* (Gmelin, 1789) (Passeriformes: Thamnophilidae) and the Purplish Jay *Cyanocorax cyanomelas* (Vieillot, 1818) (Passeriformes: Corvidae) from Brazil.

Hylophylax naevia inhabits the undergrowth of humid forests, mainly in “terra firme”, but also in “várzea” forests. It ranges from the Guyanas and southern Colombia to eastern Ecuador and Peru, northern Bolivia and the Brazilian Amazon (Ridgely & Tudor, 1994). Although this species is said to be fairly common to common along its range (Ridgely & Tudor, 1994), very few is known about its biology, and nesting records for this species exist only for Ecuador and French Guiana (Zimmer & Isler, 2003).

We found a nest of *H. naevia* in November 15, 2002, in the riparian forest of the Rio Vermelho, municipality of Castanheira, northwestern Mato Grosso (10°59'23"S - 58°41'46"W). The local vegetation is composed of tropical rain forest, presenting a mean canopy height of ca. 40 m. During the rainy

season, this area is temporarily flooded.

The nest is a rather deep cup, suspended by its rim from a forked branch. Vegetal fibers braided with thin stems were used for its construction, and several dry leaves were attached to its external surface. Some of those dry leaves and fibers formed a long fringe, which extended for more than 100 mm below the cup bottom (Fig. 1). The nest presented the following measurements: external diameter, 70 mm; depth, 55 mm; greatest height, 70 mm; minor height, 65 mm. The nest was disposed on a young tree 1.7 m tall, at 1.4 m above the ground. This tree was located 1 m away from the base of a very tall Brazilian-nut tree (*Bertholletia excelsa*, Lecythydaceae).

The nest contained two pinkish-cream colored eggs, with several large, elongate dark purple blotches. Those blotches were concentrated around the wider end of the eggs, completely obscuring it and almost reaching the other extreme of the eggs (Fig. 1). The eggs were ovoid, with the following measurements, respectively: 20.0 mm and 19.6 mm long, 14.2 mm and 13.4 mm wide, and weighting 2.5 g and 1.8 g. The great difference between the mass of the two eggs was probably due to the very different development stage of each embryo, as revealed after the egg opening for content removal (J.B.P. pers. observ.). The nest and eggs were collected and deposited at the Zoological Collection of the Instituto de Biociências, in the Universidade Federal de Mato Grosso (UFMT), Cuiabá, Brazil.

The nest described here is similar to those described by Zimmer & Isler (2003), including nest height, shape and construction material. A different kind of nest is also described for the genus by Sick (1997) and Cadena et al. (2000), which

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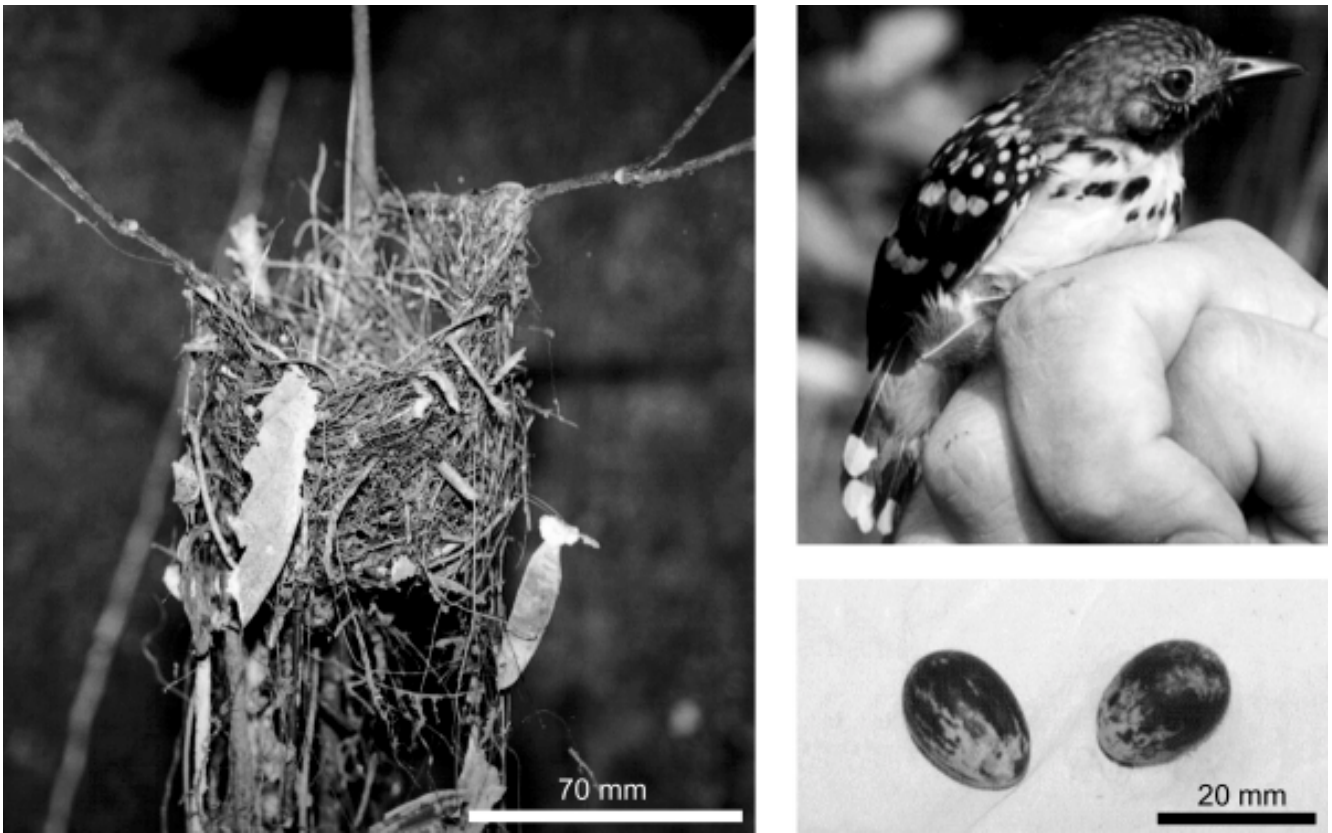


Figure 1 - Left: nest of *Hylophylax naevia*. Top-right: adult female. Bottom-right: eggs.



Figure 2 - Nest and eggs of *Cyanocorax cyanomelas*.

also observed nests constructed inside a natural cavity of a tree trunk, revealing a surprisingly plasticity among this genus' species.

Cyanocorax cyanomelas inhabits deciduous and gallery

woodland, both forest and groves and adjacent scrub. It ranges from southeastern Peru and northern and eastern Bolivia to Paraguay, southwestern Brazil and northern Argentina (Goodwin, 1976; Ridgely & Tudor, 1989). The only known nest of this species was described by Hartert and Venturi (1909) *apud* Goodwin (1976), from Argentina, and the need of a more accurate description for it was highlighted by Goodwin (1976).

We found two nests of *C. cyanomelas* at Pirizal county, in the municipality of Nossa Senhora do Livramento, Mato Grosso, Brazilian "Pantanal" (16°22'S - 56°17'W). The first nest was found during its construction, in November 13, 1999, in a "campo de murundum", a seasonally flooded savanna, characterized by trees growing over small termite mounds. On November 21st, the nest contained five eggs, which had a mean height of 32.3mm \pm 0.5 SD and mean width of 23.1 mm \pm 0.5 SD. All eggs weighted 9 g. They were light blue, with reddish brown blotches (Fig. 2). The nest was cup shaped, composed by dry twigs and lined with thin vegetal fibers and roots (Fig. 2). It was placed 3.7 m above the ground, and presented the following dimensions: external diameter, 38 cm; internal diameter, 13 cm; height, 15 cm and depth, 9 cm. Another nest was found at the border of a "mata de cordilheira", a dense arboreal semi-deciduous savanna. This nest was located 6.0 m above the ground, in a tarumarama tree (*Buchenavia tomentosa*, Combretaceae), and was structurally similar to the first nest found. The first egg was laid in December 6 and the second in

the following day. The nest remained with only two eggs until December 18, when it was found empty. The nest and eggs of *C. cyanomelas* were similar to that described by Hartert and Venturi (*apud* Goodwin, 1976) differing only by the absence of a leaf lining.

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