

SHORT COMMUNICATIONS

ORNITOLOGIA NEOTROPICAL 22: 307–311, 2011
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FIRST DESCRIPTION OF THE NEST OF THE SILVERED ANTBIRD (*SCLATERIA NAEVIA*) WITH NOTES ON EGGS AND NESTLINGS

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Primera descripción del nido del Hormiguero plateado (*Sclateria naevia*) con notas sobre huevos y polluelos.

Key words: Nest, eggs, Silvered Antbird, *Sclateria naevia*, Thamnophilidae.

INTRODUCTION

Although during the last few years nesting information on antbirds (Thamnophilidae) has increased, there are still few data on nesting biology for several antbirds (Zimmer & Isler 2003), especially from those of the lowlands forests east of the Andes (Cadena *et al.* 2000). One of these species is the Silvered Antbird (*Sclateria naevia*), a mid-sized antbird found in swampy habitats across most of Amazonia (Ridgely & Tudor 1994). The Silvered Antbird is not stealthy, usually found solitary or in pairs, hopping on the ground in damp leaf litter or along muddy margins of a stream or lake (Hilty & Brown 1986, Ridgely & Tudor 1994). Despite its wide distribution, its natural history and nesting biology remain poorly known; there are only brief reports on

the eggs (Hilty & Brown 1986, Zimmer & Isler 2003). Although the genus *Sclateria* is monotypic, its relationships are uncertain (Zimmer & Isler, 2003). Ridgely & Tudor (1994) mentioned that *Sclateria* is probably most closely related to *Pernostola* and *Schistocichla*, two genera with a confusing taxonomic history (see Isler *et al.* 2007 for a revision of species limits in the group). Here, we describe the previously unknown nest, with notes on eggs and nestlings, of the Silvered Antbird and compare the nest architecture to related genera.

METHODS

Our study was conducted in an undisturbed forest adjacent to the Tono river (12°57'24.6"S, 71°33'51"W; 940 m a.s.l.) in

Manu National Park, Cusco, Perú. The area is described in more detail by Londoño (2009). We measured the nests and eggs to the nearest 0.1 mm with calipers and weighed the eggs to the nearest 0.05 g with a digital pocket scale. We used a digital video camera (Panasonic) attached to a tripod to confirm the species and recorded feeding observations.

RESULTS

On the morning of 29 November 2008, GAL found the first nest with two nestlings. The open cup nest was woven to two horizontal bifurcate branches suspended about 0.5 m above a small stream. The inner diameters of the cup were 70.4 x 67.7 mm, the outer diameters 121.7 x 112.5 mm, the nest height 85.5 mm, the wall thickness 17.6 mm, and the cup depth 53 mm. The nestlings had black skin, eyes slightly open, and wing and body with pin-feathers developed ~30%. The wing was 8.0 mm long and the tarsus was 12 mm. Both nestlings weighed 4.35 g. Video footage revealed that male and female fed the nestlings, with each parent bringing food once during 90 min of video. On 7 December, the nest was empty.

A second nest was found under construction by SDR on 16 October 2009, over the same stream where the first nest was found, but approximately 90 m upstream from the location of the first nest. The nest was a deep open cup with the inner layer missing, but three days later the nest was completed. On 20 October, the nest contained the first egg (Fig. 1A), and the second egg was laid two days later. The nest was located 0.8 m above the water, woven to bifurcated dry branches of a seedling, and its measurements were: inner cup diameter 67 x 60.8 mm, outer cup diameter 91.1 x 101.9 mm, height 80.5 mm, wall thickness 28.3 mm, and depth 41.3 mm (Fig. 1B). Both nests had two layers, an inner layer made of thin dark epiphytic rootlets, and

an outer layer composed of thick rootlets and green moss, decorated externally with aquatic ferns and pieces of *Peperomia* sp. (Piperaceae). The eggs were dull white, heavily spotted and streaked with reddish mainly at base. They measured 19.9 x 15.5 mm and 21.7 x 15.3 mm, respectively, and weighed 2.85 g (Fig. 1C). The nest was abandoned after clutch completion.

DISCUSSION

This observation represents the first description of the nest with details of eggs and nestlings of the Silvered Antbird. Although eggs had been previously described (Zimmer & Isler 2003) the egg coloration in our case dull white, heavily spotted and streaked with reddish mainly at base was different from previous descriptions. Zimmer & Isler (2003) described the eggs as bluish white with many red-brown spots and small blotches over the entire shell, while Schönwetter (cited in Hilty & Brown 1986) described the eggs as buffy gray heavily spotted and blotched reddish brown. Further analyses and descriptions are needed to understand the sources of this variation.

The general shape of the nests reported here is similar to the other Thamnophilidae, including Bicolored Antvireo (*Dysithamnus occidentalis*) (Greeney 2002), Speckled Antshrike (*Xenornis setifrons*) (Christian 2001), Spot-backed Antbird (*Hylophylax naevius*) (Pinho *et al.* 2005), Plumbeous Antbird (*Myrmeciza hyperythra*) (Londoño 2003) and Brownish-headed Antbird (*Schistocichla brunneiceps*) (Garizabal & Londoño in prep). However, the presence of two layers of different materials in the Silvered Antbird appears to distinguish this nest from those described for other members of this family.

The genus *Sclateria* is monotypic, and its relationships are uncertain. Ridgely & Tudor (1994) mentioned that probably the most



FIG. 1. First egg in the nest (A), nest lateral view (B), and egg (C) of the Silvered Antbird (photo: S. David).

closely related genera were *Pernostola* and *Schistocichla*, which also have a problematic taxonomy (see Isler *et al.* 2007 for a revision of species limits in the group). Resulting phylogenetic hypotheses based on molecular

characters have been inconsistent. Irestedt *et al.* (2004) suggested a strong relationship between *S. naevia* and *Schistocichla leucostigma* based on Bayesian inference analyses of two nuclear introns and the mitochondrial cyto-

chrome *b* gene. A different relationship was suggested by Moyle *et al.* (2009) based in DNA sequences data from nuclear exons, in which *S. naevia* appeared more closely related to the Band-tailed Antbird (*Hypocnemoides maculicauda*), although analyses identified topological conflicts in the relationship and no species of the genus *Schistocichla* was included. Finally, a recently published phylogeny by Gomez *et al.* (2010) suggested that *S. naevia* is closely related to *S. schistacea* and *M. hyperythra*.

The *H. maculicauda* nest was described by Pinho *et al.* (2009) as a pensile pouch-shaped nest constructed with firmly-braided black fibers from the thin aerial roots, with an oblique entrance and suspended by the rim. In contrast, the materials, structure, and nest placement described by us for the Silvered Antbird show significant differences in the type of entrance, support in the branches and shape of the cup. Additional information on the nest architecture of other species may be useful for understanding the evolutionary relationships of the Silvered Antbird and the Thamnophilidae.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We want to thank G. Valencia for helping us in the field with data collection. We thank SERNAP for allowing us to work in the Manu national park. Financial support was provided by the Katherine Ordway Foundation, the Dexter Fellowships in Tropical Conservation Biology, and Louis Agassiz Fuertes Award (The Wilson Ornithological Society). M. Isler, N. Krabbe, A. Weller, and an anonymous referee made helpful comments that improved the manuscript.

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Accepted 9 March 2011.

