

Chlorostilbon notatus (Blue-chinned Sapphire)

Family: Trochilidae (Hummingbirds)

Order: Trochiliformes (Hummingbirds)

Class: Aves (Birds)



Fig. 1. Blue-chinned sapphire, *Chlorostilbon notatus*.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blue-chinned_sapphire, downloaded 17 February 2017]

TRAITS. The blue-chinned sapphire *Chlorostilbon notatus*, formerly known as *Chlorestes notata*, is a hummingbird with a short and fairly straight beak, with a black upper and reddish lower bill (Fig. 1). Length of males is 8-9.7cm, females 7-8cm, weight roughly 3-4.5g (Handbook of the Birds of the World, 2017). The male has predominantly green feathers, much darker on top, with white thighs, a metallic blue tail, and blue upper throat/chin. The female has green patched white underparts (Planet of birds, 2011).

DISTRIBUTION. Widespread over South America ranging from Colombia, Peru, Ecuador, Venezuela, Grenada, French Guiana, Suriname, Guyana, Brazil, Trinidad (Fig. 2). There have been occasional records of this species in Tobago (IUCN, 2017).

HABITAT AND ACTIVITY. Found in habitats ranging from savannas, plantations, open woodlands, fields, town gardens, forests. It can also be found in cultivated areas with large trees and is diurnal in activity. The species is characterized as 'quite common' in some parts of its range (Stotz et al., 1996), and is considered as Least Concern by the IUCN (2017).

FOOD AND FEEDING. *C. notatus* feeds on nectar from a range of brightly coloured, scented, tubular-shaped small flowers of trees, shrubs, herbs and epiphytes (Fig. 3). This serves as the main source of energy to supply their high physical needs. They can feed on a variety of flowers in a typical day, utilizing the long tongue to get the nectar out up to 13 times per second (Rocca and Sazima, 2010). *C. notatus* also feeds on small insects. This serves as a vital source of protein especially during the breeding season to assure the young is properly developed. Insects are normally captured in flight by snatching off leaves or branches (Rocca and Sazima, 2010). Feeding territories are set up by the male where they drive away other males and large insects including bumblebees and hawk moths that may want to feed in their territory (Fig. 4).

REPRODUCTION. The female lays two eggs which are incubated for 16 days. The young are born blind and motionless. The male is only involved during the actual mating process. The female is in charge of constructing the deep cup-shaped nest by lining it with soft plant fibres which are intertwined. She reinforces the structure with spider silk and other sticky substances to allow it to expand as the chick grows. The outside of the nest is covered in green moss for disguise in a protected area in a shrub or a tree. The female is responsible for protecting and feeding the chicks. Partly digested insects are fed to the chicks by pushing them down their throats, straight into their stomachs with the long beak. The chicks are usually brooded for the first week or two and then left alone. By the time the chicks are 18-19 days old they leave the nest.

BEHAVIOUR. The fluttering/flying motion of hummingbirds is considered as the ultimate art of bird flight (Pough et al., 1996). *C. notatus* achieve their controlled flight by a rotation of the wings through a 180° angle and by having a remarkably high metabolism (Fig. 5). Their regular flight speed is 48km/h but they are capable of reaching 80km/h during an escape or chase. They communicate through visual displays. The males use aerial flights and terrifying demonstrations to guard their territories or a preferred feeding site (Fig. 4).

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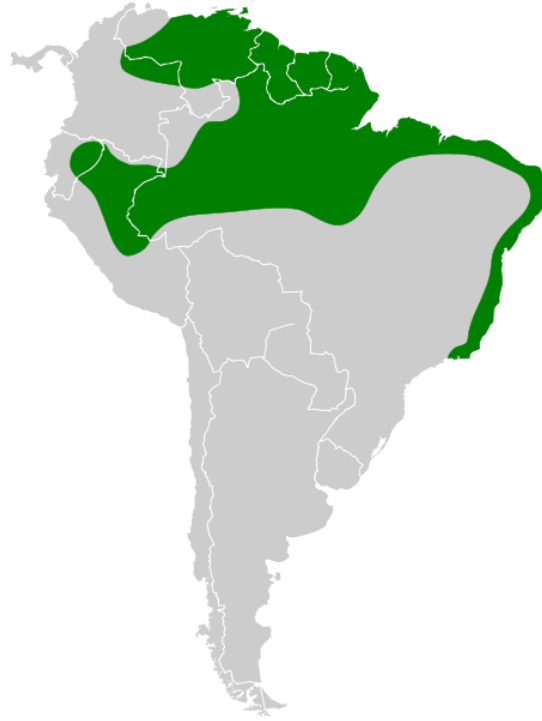


Fig. 2. Blue-chinned sapphire geographic distribution.

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Chlorestes_notata_map.svg, downloaded 5 March 2017]



Fig. 3. Blue-chinned sapphire feeding on cashew flowers.

[<http://www.kesterclarke.net/galleries/birds-of-guyana/hummingbirds/blue-chinned-sapphire/>, downloaded 6 March 2017]



Fig. 4. Rufous-crested coquette just about to be knocked off by the larger blue-chinned sapphire.
[<http://scillyspider.blogspot.com/2015/02/hummingbirds-at-manu-learning-centre.html>, downloaded 6 March 2017]



Fig. 5. Blue-chinned sapphire in flight.

[<http://www.sepiastudiott.com/hummingbirds/>, downloaded 6 March 2017]