

# Observation on breeding of Silky-tailed Nightjar *Antrostomus sericocaudatus sericocaudatus* (Caprimulgidae) from Paraguay

*Observação sobre a reprodução do bacurau-rabo-de-seda  
Antrostomus sericocaudatus sericocaudatus (Caprimulgidae)  
do Paraguai*

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## ABSTRACT

We provide the first Paraguayan breeding data for the rare Atlantic Forest species Silky-tailed Nightjar *Antrostomus sericocaudatus sericocaudatus* (Caprimulgidae). A nest was located in Itapúa department on 10 November 2017 and a single chick was found to be present on 5 December. The female attending the nest was observed to perform a distraction display.

**Keywords:** Atlantic Forest; distraction display; Itapúa department

## RESUMO

Fornecemos os primeiros dados de reprodução paraguaios para a espécie rara da mata atlântica bacurau-rabo-de-seda *Antrostomus sericocaudatus sericocaudatus* (Caprimulgidae). Um ninho foi localizado no departamento de Itapúa em 10 de novembro de 2017 e um único filhote foi encontrado em 5 de dezembro. A fêmea que frequentava o ninho foi observada realizando uma exibição de distração.

**Palavras-chave:** departamento de Itapúa; exibição de distração; mata atlântica.

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## INTRODUCTION

The Silky-tailed Nightjar *Antrostomus sericocaudatus* occurs in two subspecies, the nominate *A. s. sericocaudatus* in the Atlantic Forests of eastern Paraguay, southern Brazil and northeastern Argentina (GUYRA PARAGUAY, 2004; VAN PERLO, 2009; PEARMAN & ARETA, 2020) and *A. s. mengeli* in eastern Peru, northern Bolivia and scattered areas of Amazonian Brazil (SCHULENBERG *et al.*, 2007; HERZOG *et al.*, 2017). In Paraguay, it is assumed to be a breeding resident confined to the Atlantic Forest region and is known from a limited geographical area in well-preserved tall forest in Alto Paraná, Canindeyú, Caazapá and Itapúa departments (BERTONI, 1919; PARTRIDGE, 1956; STORER, 1989; MADROÑO-NIETO & ESQUIVEL, 1997; MADROÑO-NIETO *et al.*, 1997; COCKLE *et al.*, 2005; PÉREZ VILLAMAYOR & COLMAN JARA, 2011; SMITH *et al.*, 2017).

The breeding behaviour of *A. s. mengeli* in Peru was documented in detail by Wilkinson (2009) and that of *A. s. sericocaudatus* in Argentina by Bodrati & Cockle (2018), but there is no published data available for the species in Paraguay. Here, we document some observations on a nest of *A. s. sericocaudatus* from Paraguay, discovered at Estancia Nueva Gambach, Itapúa department (S26° 62'62.5", W 55° 66'52.2") on 5 December 2017.

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## MATERIAL AND METHODS

The results were obtained through casual observations at close range (thus not necessitating any special equipment). The behaviours observed were noted as they happened, and photographs were taken using a Canon 1100D SLR camera with a ES-f 55-250mm telephoto lens.

## RESULTS

An adult female Silky-tailed Nightjar was first observed sitting on the ground on 10 November 2017 in an area of transition between high, old growth forest and a bamboo-dominated swamp (habitat type map of property available in Smith & Lusseau (2022), figure 5). Initially, the bird was sat on the ground around 10 cm from the tourist hiking trail (S26° 37" 13.4" W55° 39' 51.9"). When approached, the nightjar flew 1.5 m at a height of around 30 cm before landing again. This was repeated twice.



**Figure 1** – Female Silky-tailed Nightjar *Antrostomus sericocaudatus sericocaudatus* performing distraction display, ruffling wing feathers to create an audible sound. Photo: Rebecca Smith.

On 5 of December 2017, another nightjar, assumed to be the same individual, was encountered in the same location. When approached, the nightjar flew about 20 cm distance to a height of about 10 cm off the ground, where she perched on a piece of broken bamboo at a distance of approximately 0.5 to 0.7 m from the observers. She did not vocalize but drew attention to herself by ruffling her wings and tail feathers which did make an audible sound (figure 1). Upon recognizing this as a distraction display, the observers were able to locate a nest on the ground, containing a single chick (figure 2). The chick was located 10 cm from the hiking trail and there was no structural nest, the chick was rather sitting in a small flattened hollow amongst fallen bamboo twigs and leaves and small, new growth plants, consistent with nesting observations of this species in Argentina (BODRATI & COCKLE, 2018).



**Figure 2** – Chick of Silky-tailed Nightjar *Antrostomus sericocaudatus sericocaudatus* in the nest Photo: Rebecca Smith.

## DISCUSSION

In the Argentinean Atlantic Forest, the incubation period of the Silky-tailed Nightjar has been estimated at 19 days (BODRATI & COCKLE, 2018). That no nest had been built and that the chick was not concealed by any vegetation is presumably a result of the species relying entirely on camouflage and the distraction display of the sitting adult to confer protection from predators.

Comparing the photographs of the chick with photographs taken in Argentina (BODRATI & COCKLE, 2018; figure 6E and F), we estimate that the single Paraguayan chick is between 12 and 15 days old. Consequently, we can hypothesize that laying took place in the period around 1-4 November, and that hatching around 20-23 November. This means that eggs were already present in the nest during the first sighting of the nightjar on the 10 November, though they were not observed at the time. The distraction display performed by the adult bird on the 10 November led observers much further from the nest than the display on the 5 December, possibly indicating a greater reluctance to move from the hatched chick than the eggs, or reflecting the greater visibility of the eggs when compared to the chick, requiring distraction to immediately lead the threat away from the nest. In Argentina, the female nightjar was observed to perform a distraction display on the ground by the nest when the chick was one or two days old (BODRATI & COCKLE, 2018).

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