

Nest, eggs and nestling of the Collared Crescentchest *Melanopareia torquata* in the Cerrado region, Brazil

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RESUMO: Ninho, ovos e ninhego de *Melanopareia torquata* (Melanopareiidae) na região do Cerrado, Brasil. Descrevemos o ninho e o ninhego de *Melanopareia torquata*, Melanopareiidae, espécie endêmica do Cerrado, única de sua família no Brasil. Pouco se conhece a respeito de sua biologia reprodutiva. Anteriormente pertencente à família Rhinocryptidae, *M. torquata* difere destes principalmente por habitar áreas abertas e não possuir coloração críptica, entretanto sua relação com os rinocriptídeos não é bem compreendida. O ninho globular foi encontrado em 20 de outubro de 2006, ainda sem conteúdo, em uma moita de gramínea. Houve postura de dois ovos e um ninhego eclodiu, desaparecendo do ninho no início de seu desenvolvimento. O ninho de *M. torquata* é semelhante ao ninho de *Melanopareia maximiliani* e difere dos ninhos conhecidos de rinocriptídeos, que em sua maioria são subterrâneos e possuem túnel de acesso.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: *Melanopareia torquata*, ninho, ovos, ninhego, Cerrado.

KEY-WORDS: *Melanopareia torquata*, nest, eggs, nestling, Brazilian Savanna.

The Collared Crescentchest *Melanopareia torquata* is an endemic species of the Cerrado biome, a large region in the center of South America (Silva 1997, Silva and Bates 2002). There is no agreement about the phylogenetic relationship of the genus *Melanopareia*, however Irestedt *et al.* (2002) and Chesser (2004) excluded it from the Rhinocryptidae family. The Brazilian Ornithological Records Committee considered it as the only member of the new family Melanopareiidae in Brazil (CBRO 2006). Furthermore, *M. torquata* differs from the Brazilian rhinocryptids (*e.g.* *Scytalopus* and *Merulaxis*) by a non-cryptical coloration and the open and sunny areas it inhabits (Sick 1997).

Like most Brazilian rhinocryptids, little is known about the reproductive biology of *M. torquata*. Although observations on egg characteristics can be found in Sick (1997), no records on the nest were found in the literature. We describe the nest and make some considerations on the eggs and nestling of the Collared Crescentchest. The nest was found at the Estação Ecológica de Águas Emendadas (ESECAE), a conservation unit located at Distrito Federal, Brazil. The reserve area encompasses 10,500 ha of native Cerrado vegetation, including its many structural types (Silva Jr. and Felfili 1996).

We found the nest on October 20 2006 in “cerrado típico”. Before that, we observed two adults nearby the nest location on 18 October. One of them was standing on a branch about 1.5 m high giving “rrru” calls, while the other was on the ground collecting and carrying material to the nest. The globular nest had a side entrance and was built in a tussock of grass at 15.0 cm from the ground. It was made of grass, supported from its base and attached by its sides to the grass leaves (Figure 1). Some tree leaves were piled up under the

nest apparently as an additional support to it. The entrance was 4.2 cm wide and 3.7 cm high. The height, width and length of the nest were 13.5 cm, 10.0 cm and 10.5 cm, respectively. Accordingly to the proposal standardization made by Simon and Pacheco (2005), *M. torquata* nest should be classified as *closed/globular/base* and *lateral*.

Beginning on October 20, nest checks were made at 3-4 days intervals. Two ovoid-shaped, greenish-blue eggs were found on October 27 (Figure 1). Length and width of each egg were respectively: 21.2 mm and 15.7 mm; 19.5 mm and 15.4 mm. On 13 November the nest had one unhatched egg and one naked tan nestling, with closed eyes and a 7.1 mm tarsus (Figure 1). The time between egg laying and the hatching of the nestling suggests an incubation period between 15 and 18 days. On November 16 only the unhatched egg was present in the nest, indicating predation of the nestling. No adults were observed. Both the unhatched egg and the nest were collected and stored (0038) in the collection of the Zoology Department, University of Brasília.

The nest of *Melanopareia torquata* is very similar to the one reported for *Melanopareia maximiliani* (Di Giacomo 2005). Eggs in the last species, however, are whitish and have large dark spots close to the larger end (Di Giacomo 2005). Otherwise, the nest of *M. torquata* has the same form of the nest described for the Grass Wren *Cisthorus platensis* Troglodytidae (de la Peña 1987). Both species can be found in the study area and might diverge mainly in the type of Cerrado vegetation structure in which their nests are built, considering that *C. platensis* inhabits “campo sujo” and “campo limpo”, while *M. torquata* is usually found in “campo cerrado” and “cerrado sensu strictu” (Tubelis and Cavalcanti 2001). The



FIGURE 1. Collared Crescentchest nest (right), detail of the nest entrance with the eggs inside it (left above) and 1-3 days nestling (left below).

eggs of *M. torquata* we found differ from the description of Sick (1997) by the lack of any speckles.

However, the nest of the Collared Crescentchest differs in many aspects from the majority of nests reported for the Rhinocryptidae species, with the exception of the *Rhynocrypta lanceolata* nest (Mezquida 2001). The nests of *Scytalopus argentifrons* (Young and Zuchowski 2003), *Scytalopus superciliaris* (Stiles 1979), *Scytalopus micropterus* (Greeney and Gelis 2005), *Scytalopus parkeri* (Greeney and Rombough 2005) are generally subterranean, with an obscured entrance tunnel and are made of moss. *Liosceles thracicus* builds its nest with twigs, mosses, grasses, lichens, small leaves and clumps of earth on the ground, within small tree root systems, opened directly to the outside (Rosemberg 1986). *Pteroptochos* spp. excavate their own burrows with an entrance tunnel and *Scelorchilus albicollis* nests are built in burrows as well, but they can occupy abandoned rodent nests (Johnson 1965 in Rosenberg 1986). The description of *Melanopareia torquata* nest and nestling may help to understand the relationship between *Melanopareia* and other tapaculos.

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