

Record of the White-throated Woodcreeper *Xiphocolaptes albicollis* using a millipede for anting in Argentina

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ABSTRACT: We describe the second record of the White-throated Woodcreeper *Xiphocolaptes albicollis* anting with a millipede in South America, and the first such record for Argentina. The woodcreeper rubbed the millipede against its wings while perched at the base of a tree and on the ground. The anting seemed to not seriously injure the millipede, identified as a species of the Rhinocricidae (Spirobolida).

KEY-WORDS: White-throated Woodcreeper; *Xiphocolaptes albicollis*; anting; millipede; preening; Argentina.

The term anting is used for a behavior of birds in which they use arthropods, mostly ants, to rub on their plumage as part of the birds' preening process (Chisholm 1959; Potter 1970). Several hypotheses have been proposed for anting, including deterring of ectoparasites (Clark & Clark 1990; Sick 1997). Another hypothesis is that ant secretions soothe skin that has been irritated when new feathers emerge (Southern 1963; Potter 1970). At present, about 200 bird species (Clayton & Vernon 1993) and mammals have been reported to perform anting (Valderrama *et al.* 2000; Weldon *et al.* 2003). Among wild birds, anting is performed quickly and can be overlooked or mistaken for foraging or simply as sun/dust-bathing with anting taking place passively (Chisholm 1959; Potter 1970; Wenny 1998). Besides ants and other noxious arthropods, birds are known to use millipedes while anting (Chisholm 1959). Here we report on the White-throated Woodcreeper *Xiphocolaptes albicollis* anting with a millipede, the first record of this behavior for Argentina.

We observed a White-throated Woodcreeper handling a millipede around noon, on 19 November 2011 at Cruce Caballero Provincial Park, Misiones, Argentina (26°31'S, 54°00'E; 550-600 m elevation). During our observations, the woodcreeper rubbed the millipede against its wings mostly while perched at the base of a tree

about 50-100 cm above ground, and once on the ground. On one occasion the bird flew a few meters away, leaving the millipede on the ground. While photographing the dropped millipede we noted that it was not severely injured, and afterwards we moved away to proceed with our observations. The woodcreeper returned in less than one minute, picked up the millipede, and proceeded anting. After 10 min the bird retreated into the forest, thus ending our observations. The millipede was identified as a species of the Rhinocricidae (Order Spirobolida).

Our observations of woodcreeper anting were similar to those described by Sazima (2009) for the same bird species, except that the bird he observed ingested the millipede at the end of the anting session. As we were unable to record the end of the anting process, we cannot say whether the bird was trying to lessen the effects of ingesting a toxic or distasteful prey as suggested by Sazima (2009). The woodcreeper we observed could have been biting the millipede to enhance its secretions by accessing the internal reservoirs of glandular fluids, as suggested for monkeys biting millipedes (Valderrama *et al.* 2000; Weldon *et al.* 2003). Careful observation of additional bird species' behavior during dust/sunbathing or even during regular preening may yield a better understanding of the use of odorous/noxious substances from arthropods as part of their preening process.

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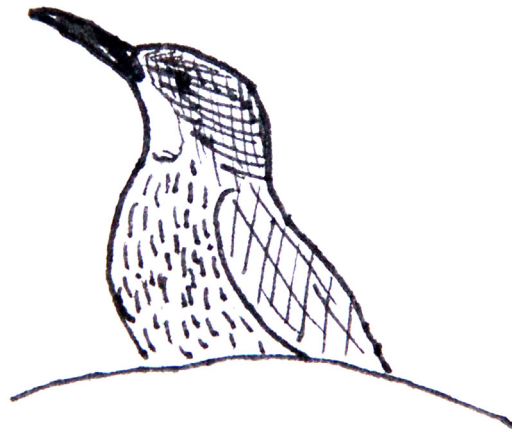
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