

First nesting records of the Golden-plumed Conure *Leptosittaca branickii*

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Erste Brutnachweise für den Hochlandsittich *Leptosittaca branickii*

Die Verfasser berichten von acht Brutnachweisen für den Hochlandsittich in Ecuador und in Kolumbien. Im Januar und Februar 1998 wurden drei Nester in Süd-Ecuador (Provinz Zamora-Chinchipe, 2550 m über NN), im Juni 1998 fünf Nester in Kolumbien (Zentral-Anden, 2500 m über NN) gefunden, die jeweils Junge enthielten. Die Nisthöhlen waren stets in abgestorbenen Ceroxylon-Palmen angelegt.

Schlagworte: Hochlandsittich, *Leptosittaca branickii*, erster Brutnachweis.

Summary

The authors report the recent find of eight active nests of the Golden-plumed Conure (*Leptosittaca branickii*), three in southern Ecuador (province Zamora-Chinchipe at 2550 m) in January and February 1998, and five in Colombia (Central Andes at 2500 m) in June 1998. All the nests were in cavities in dead *Ceroxylon* palms.

Key words: Golden-plumed Conure, *Leptosittaca branickii*, first nesting record.

1 First nesting records

The Golden-plumed Conure (*Leptosittaca branickii*) is a large nomadic parakeet. It occurs locally at 2400-3400 m, occasionally down to 1400 m in the Andes of Colombia, Ecuador and Peru. It was considered threatened by COLLAR et al (1992). The only previously published data on nesting is two laying females and a male with active gonads collected in Puracé, southern Colombia in February, and an observation of a pair prospecting holes in dead Wax Palms (*Ceroxylon quindiuense*) in Quindio, central Colombia in May (COLLAR et al. 1992). – We here report the recent find of eight active nests, three in southern Ecuador in January and February, and five in central Colombia in June. All the nests were in cavities in dead *Ceroxylon* palms. Two nests were examined closely, one contained one, the other two nearly fledged young.

In January and February 1998 SOMOZA located three nests at 2550 m elevation in southern Ecuador, near the ridge of Cordillera de Sabanilla, province of Zamora-Chinchipe. The nests were placed in dead, leafless Wax Palms, two of them fairly fresh and 15-20 m apart, one strongly decayed and 40 m from the others. Palms were scarce in the region. One of the palms had a hole on the side, one a hole at the top, and the third, strongly decayed palm had three holes near the top. All holes were from 5 to 10 m above the ground. An incubating bird could be heard rummaging inside the decayed palm 2 m above the ground, 6 m below the entrance hole.

On 19-21 January 1998 two pairs of conures were seen entering and leaving two nest holes at three to four hours intervals, apparently feeding small young in the nests. On 15-16 February SOMOZA visited the area again, but found no signs of young in the two nests. Two parrots visited a hole on several occasions, seemingly only prospecting. They also entered holes in two adjacent palms. While inspecting one of these, a very decomposed palm, a third bird called from the bottom of the hole. This appeared to be an incubating bird as judged from the rapidity with which it returned to the nest after each disturbance.

During a visit to the same place in June no conures were found in the area, but in September, nine birds were seen feeding in the vicinity of the palms (one of which had fallen), but were not seen entering the holes. Another 39 birds were roosting in different neighbouring trees, about 800 m from the palms.

In the Central Andes of Colombia, at a site with large numbers of wax palms, B. LÓPEZ-LANÚS encountered *Leptosittaca branickii* several times daily throughout the months of June to September 1998. On 18 June he found and observed five active nests at 2500 m elevation, in dead, c. 20 m tall, leafless, rotten wax palms, c. 60 m apart, each with entrance hole from the top of the trunk. One of these palms was in a pasture, the others in secondary forest. Each nest appeared to have young. Two accessible nests had one and two young, respectively. These appeared at the holes when adults arrived approximately every three hours. Adults left and returned to the nests in groups of four or six. The young fledged synchronously a few days later.

In June mostly pairs or smaller groups of four to ten individuals were encountered in the region. The only larger group seen in this period was one of 20 birds on 24 June, probably non-breeding birds. Flocks grew through July to September. At one site, for example, one group of 12 was seen for one week in July, whereas in August two groups, of 20 and 17 were present. Unfortunately juveniles could not be distinguished from adults in the field.

Nesting, if seasonal, thus appears to occur at different times in central Colombia (May -July) and in southern Colombia and southern Ecuador (January - March), probably corresponding to the available food supply. – Further studies are needed to establish the species's degree of dependence on wax palms for nesting, and its major food plants in different areas.

2 References

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