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A New Record of the Endangered White-winged Nightjar (*Eleothreptus candicans*) from Beni, Bolivia

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ABSTRACT.—The ecology of the White-winged Nightjar (*Eleothreptus candicans*) is poorly known. Only three breeding populations (one from Brazil and two from Paraguay) are known, and populations are decreasing due to continuing destruction of *cerrado* habitat. On 14 September 2003, we took several photos of an unidentified nightjar in Beni Biosphere Reserve, Departamento Beni, Bolivia. The bird was later determined to be an adult male White-winged Nightjar. Interestingly, the only previous record for Bolivia was a male collected in 1987 at the same locality and time of year. Because the White-winged Nightjar is non-migratory and secretive, we hypothesize that there may be a sustainable population of White-winged Nightjars in Bolivia, and the paucity of sightings may be due to the species' low detectability. Received 16 December 2004, accepted 11 October 2005.

The White-winged Nightjar (*Eleothreptus candicans*), a member of the Caprimulgidae (Cleere 1999, Pople 2004), was recently reclassified from the genus *Caprimulgus* to the genus *Eleothreptus* (Cleere 2002). Its known range and population size are very small, and its ecology has received attention only recently (Pople 2003). Parker et al. (1996) assigned the species High Conservation Priority and the IUCN lists the species as Endangered (IUCN Red List; Pople 2004). *E. candicans* is threatened by ongoing loss of its *cerrado* habitat (heavy grazing, trampling, invasive grasses, habitat conversion to plantations, and large-scale, uncontrolled grass fires; Cleere 1999, Pople 2004).

Until the 1980s, White-winged Nightjars were known only from two museum specimens collected at the beginning of the 19th century in Oriçanga, São Paulo state, and Cuiabá, Mato Grosso state, Brazil (Sclater 1866). Only three populations have been found, all

in southern Brazil and eastern Paraguay: Emas National Park, Brazil (Rodrigues et al. 1999); Aguará Ñu, Mbaracayú Forest Nature Reserve, Paraguay (Lowen et al. 1996, Clay et al. 1998); and a recently discovered population at Laguna Blanca, Departamento San Pedro, central Paraguay (Anonymous 2002). Additionally, in 1987 a single male was captured and collected at the Beni Biological Station, Departamento Beni, Bolivia (Davis and Flores 1994). Despite specific searches for the species in subsequent years, however, it has not been relocated at Beni (Brace et al. 1997, Brace 2000, Pople 2004; R. Brace and J. Hornbuckle *in litt.*).

Surveys in Aguará Ñu have resulted in a population estimate of 40–150 individuals (Clay et al. 1998, Pople 2003) at that location. The number of birds observed in Emas National Park was 12 in September 1985 and only 1 in October 1990 and in November 1997 (Rodrigues et al. 1999). Although there are no other recently published records from Emas, the national park probably supports a sizeable population of *E. candicans* (Pople 2004) because Emas encompasses a large extent of apparently suitable habitat. The recently discovered population at Laguna Blanca in Paraguay is estimated to include a minimum of 30 birds (R. P. Clay *in litt.*).

On 14 September 2003 at 22:00 EDT, we photographed an unidentified nightjar on a termite mound between the Beni Biological Station (Estación Biológica del Beni; 14° 50' S, 66° 17' W) and Laguna Normandia (~1.5 km northwest of the station; see Fig. 3 in Brace et al. 1997), Departamento Beni in northern Bolivia. Later the bird was unambiguously identified as a male *E. candicans* (Fig. 1). Because it lacked visible wear on the remiges and pale flecking in the contour plumage, it is probable that the individual had recently completed a molt. If the species undergoes the same pattern of molt in both Beni Biosphere

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FIG. 1. Adult male White-winged Nightjar (*Eleothreptus candicans*) photographed on 14 September 2003 in Beni Biosphere Reserve, Departamento Beni, Bolivia. Photo by R. Šumbera.

Reserve and Paraguay (i.e., replacement of flight feathers in a single post-nuptial molt), it suggests that the species may breed considerably earlier in Bolivia than in Paraguay (where it breeds mainly between September and December).

Beni Biological Station is 180 km west of Trinidad and 50 km east of San Borja on El Porvenir Estancia. El Porvenir Estancia lies in the Llanos de Mojos, which is a lowland plain (~200 m elevation) characterized as savanna with forest islands. The habitat where we observed the White-winged Nightjar is a seasonally inundated savanna with a high density of termite mounds (Fig. 2).

Ours is only the second record of White-winged Nightjar in Bolivia, the first having been made in September 1987 (Davis and Flores 1994). Interestingly, both observations were made near Beni Biological Station at the same time of year (11 September 1987 and 14 September 2003). Despite a number of research programs that have been conducted at the station (A. B. Hennessey *in litt.*), there had been no additional records of White-winged Nightjar after 1987. R. C. Brace and J. Horn-

buckle (*in litt.*), for example, searched for White-winged Nightjars and conducted mist-netting from mid-July through the end of August every year from 1992 to 1999, but recorded no White-winged Nightjars. Although the White-winged Nightjar is considerably less conspicuous than many other sympatric nightjar species common in Bolivia (R. G. Pople *in litt.*), it seems unlikely that there would be so few observations of the species if the area supported a small resident population. Rather, the two individuals recorded during the last 2 decades may have come from an undiscovered population elsewhere in the northern Bolivian lowlands. However, *E. candicans* is presumed to be a resident species. Indeed, radio-tracking work in Paraguay (Pople 2003) revealed that White-winged Nightjars are year-round residents, and a study of captive birds revealed a post-nuptial molt pattern typical of a nonmigratory species. Therefore, the occurrence of the two individuals at Beni Biological Station during the same time of year may indicate that some birds make local movements, possibly in response to fires (Pople 2004).



FIG. 2. Typical habitat of the White-winged Nightjar—wet savanna with termite mounds providing perches above the surrounding young vegetation. The forest in the background is Florida Fragment south of Laguna Normandia, 1.5 km northwest of Beni Biological Station, Departamento Beni, Bolivia. The photo in Figure 1 was taken within this area. Photo by T. Grim.

Neotropical savannas are under increasing human pressure due to large-scale conversion of grassland habitats to pastures (Marris 2005). Although the White-winged Nightjar is a typical savanna dweller and is adapted to irregular and small-scale fires, it likely has been negatively affected by regular and large-scale burning in recent years (Brace et al. 1997, Pople 2004). Conservation of savanna habitats—including *cerrado*, the primary habitat for *E. candicans*—has been neglected thus far. Because savanna habitats are facing greater threats than Amazonian rainforests, the conservation of *cerrado* habitat should become a top priority in the Neotropics (Marris 2005).

Our observation highlights the importance of Beni Biosphere Reserve for threatened ($n = 4$) and near-threatened ($n = 15$) bird species in Bolivia (Brace et al. 1997). Among these 19 species are 11 that rely wholly or partially on savanna habitat. So far, 500 bird species have been reported from Beni Biosphere Re-

serve (Brace et al. 1997, Brace 2000). We add to this list one more species: on the same day (14 September 2003) that we observed the White-winged Nightjar, we also recorded one Black-throated Saltator (*Saltator atricollis*).

We hypothesize that Departamento Beni in northern Bolivia holds a resident population of *E. candicans*, and that the paucity of records from Bolivia reflects the lack of intensive searches during the correct season and the low detectability of this species. We concur with Brace et al. (1997) that more information on the White-winged Nightjar's status is required, and we hope that our observation provides an impetus for further research on this elusive species.

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Predation of Eared Grebe by Great Blue Heron

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ABSTRACT.—Great Blue Herons (*Ardea herodias*) typically prey upon fish and other aquatic organisms, and they occasionally take small mammals and birds. We observed a Great Blue Heron attack, kill, and attempt to consume an Eared Grebe (*Podiceps nigricollis*). The heron was unable to swallow the grebe, and it abandoned the carcass after approximately 30 min. An examination of the carcass showed that the grebe lacked obvious physical deformities. Our observation, coupled with a similar one nearby, indicates that Great Blue Herons attack and kill birds larger than reported previously. Received 11 January 2005, accepted 19 September 2005.

On the morning of 14 November 2004, we witnessed an adult Great Blue Heron (*Ardea herodias*) attack, kill, and attempt to consume an Eared Grebe (*Podiceps nigricollis*) at Oso Flaco Lake (35° 00' N, 120° 30' W) in San Luis Obispo County, California. The incident occurred shortly after the heron landed near the grebe and began foraging in shallow (~30 cm deep) water. At approximately 11:25 PST, the heron caught the grebe with a stabbing motion as the grebe swam underwater. The heron then proceeded to subdue the grebe by grasping its neck, shaking it, and submerging it intermittently. After approximately 15 min, the grebe appeared to be dead. At this point, the heron briefly released the grebe to deliver several sharp blows to its head and chest area.

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