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Hayes, F. E.

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INTRASPECIFIC KLEPTOPARASITISM IN THE GREAT KISKADEE (*PITANGUS SULPHURATUS*)¹

FLOYD E. HAYES²

RESUMEN. Cleptoparasitismo intraespecífico en el Benteveo Común (*Pitangus sulphuratus*). Se presentan datos sobre observaciones de Benteveos Comunes robándose alimentos. Este es el primer registro de este comportamiento para aves de la familia Tyrannidae.

Kleptoparasitic behavior, defined as the interspecific and intraspecific stealing of already procured food, is exhibited by many families and species of birds (see review by Brockmann and Barnard 1979), but apparently has not been reported for birds of the family Tyrannidae. This note describes an observation of intraspecific kleptoparasitism in the Great Kiskadee (*Pitangus sulphuratus*), a large, ubiquitous Neotropical flycatcher.

At 13:40 on 9 January 1988, I observed (from 15-20 m) a group of six Great Kiskadees chasing each other about several bushes beside the shore of a small pond at Guarambaré, Departamento Central, Paraguay. On several occasions I clearly saw (through

7x35 binoculars) a large (ca. 2x4 cm), green orthopteran insect conspicuously gripped in the bill of a bird. The bird usually bashed the insect several times against the limb it was perched on, and then would fly off when one or more kiskadees mobbed it. The bird being pursued (host) would usually fly directly into the brush, disappear from view, and eventually it or another bird would emerge at the edge of a bush with the insect in its bill. On two occasions I saw the insect drop from the bill of one bird and be immediately picked up from the ground by another bird. This chasing behavior ensued for about 7 min, during which time the insect was exchanged several times between birds, until none of the birds possessed the insect; it was apparently consumed. During this period I never saw actual contact between the birds. Rather, it appeared that the mobbing birds pursued their intended victim until they were outmaneuvered in the brush or until the host relinquished the insect. A single Tropical Kingbird (*Tyrannus melancholicus*) was in the same bushes during part of this episode, but I never saw it chase any of the kiskadees.

Great Kiskadees are most common in open country, where they usually occur in pairs; they appear to be most common near water, where they often capture invertebrates and small vertebrates at or near the surface. Although I have watched the foraging activities of kiskadees and other open country flycatchers on many occasions, I have never observed another incidence of food piracy. Other species of

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 2. Museo Nacional de Historia Natural del Paraguay, Sucursal 19, Ciudad Universitaria, San Lorenzo, Paraguay. Present address: Department of Natural Sciences, Section of Biology, Loma Linda University, Loma Linda, California 92350, USA.

flycatchers that may practice kleptoparasitism would most likely include the larger, open country species because, in an "open" habitat, potential hosts can be watched at a longer distance, hiding from kleptoparasites is more difficult, the capture and carrying of prey is more visible and prey items can be found more easily after they are relinquished by the host (Paulson 1986).

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GREATER YELLOW HEADED VULTURES FEEDING ON A THREE-TOED SLOTH IN AMAZONIAN RAINFOREST¹

JEAN-MARC HERO², ALBERTINA LIMA³ Y LEO JOSEPH⁴

At approximately 10am on 26 April, 1986, (J. M. H. and A. L.) found several *Cathartes melambrotus* feeding on the remains of a freshly killed three-toed sloth *Bradypus tridactylus* in primary rainforest at Reserva Florestal Adolfo Ducke, 25 km northeast of Manaus, Amazonas, Brasil. Our identification of the birds was based on their occurrence deep in primary rainforest, this being the usual habitat of *C. melambrotus* into which the very similar Lesser Yellow-headed Vulture *C. burrovianus* is rarely if ever recorded. Evidently the sloth had been recently killed by a jaguar. *Panthera onca* or puma *Felis concolor* (feces of which were prominent at the site) and its remains were scattered in a radius of approximately 3 meters. Our attention was attracted to the remains by the vultures when they flushed and not by the smell of decaying carrion. The smell of cat feces, however, dominated all smells in the area.

Neither Black (*Coragyps atratus*) nor Turkey (*Cathartes aura*) Vultures were observed within closed rainforest at this site during three years of fieldwork here by J. M. H. They were frequently observed in nearby open and disturbed areas, however.

We can find no published information on specific prey items of *C. melambrotus*. Our observations

suggest that this species is able to detect carrion within closed rainforest. Detection of carrion by sight would be difficult in this habitat, so the birds probably locate food using a well developed sense of smell, such as has been documented in other neotropical vultures (Stager 1964, Bang 1964, Houston 1988).

Commenting on this observation, J. M. Thiollay (pers. comm.) noted that it is indeed rare to see *C. melambrotus* on a carcass though it is by far the most abundant vulture in Amazonian primary rainforest. On hebarin of several years' observations in French Guiana, Thiollay can recall only 15-20 identified prey items. These were mostly medium- or large-sized mammals or birds that had been shot and not recovered by hunters. Finally, Thiollay notes that *C. melambrotus* will gather around carcasses along forest edges, on rocky outcrops and on riverbanks.

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1. Aceptada para su publicación el 6 set de 1991.
 2. Dept. Zoology, University of Melbourne, Parkville, Melbourne, Victoria 3052, Australia.
 3. Departamento de Ecología, Instituto Nacional de Pesquisas da Amazônia (INPA). Alameda Cosme Ferreira, 1756; Aleixo 69083, Manaus, Amazonas, Brasil.
 4. Department of Zoology, University of Queensland, St. Lucia, Qld. Australia, 4067.