

## THREE UNUSUAL BIRD NESTS FROM THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

ELADIO M. FERNÁNDEZ<sup>1</sup> AND ALLAN R. KEITH<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Alberto Larancuent #23, Edificio Stephanie Marie I, Naco, Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic;  
and <sup>2</sup>Turtle Brook Farm, PO Box 247, Chilmark, MA 02535, USA

*Abstract*—We report unusual nests of Black Swift (*Cypseloides niger*), Palmchat (*Dulus dominicus*), and Golden Swallow (*Tachycineta euchrysea*), all in southwestern Dominican Republic.

*Key words:* Black Swift, *Cypseloides niger*, Dominican Republic, *Dulus dominicus*, Golden Swallow, nests, Palmchat, *Tachycineta euchrysea*,

*Resumen*—Reportamos tres nidos inusuales de Vencejo Negro (*Cypseloides niger*), Cigua Palmera (*Dulus dominicus*) y Golondrina Verde (*Tachycineta euchrysea*), todos en la region suroeste de la República Dominicana.

*Palabras clave:* Cigua Palmera, *Cypseloides niger*, *Dulus dominicus*, Golondrina Verde, República Dominicana, *Tachycineta euchrysea*, Vencejo Negro

ON 21 JUNE 2002, Nicolas Corona, a local bird-watcher from Pedernales, informed Danilo Mejia of The Society for the Conservation and Study of Caribbean Birds about a “swallow” nesting on the wall of a canyon near Nicolas’ property in Los Arroyos, Pedernales Province, on the southern slope of Sierra de Bahoruco. The next day Danilo Mejia, Vinicio Mejia, Mirasabel Paulino, and the senior author visited the site. It is about 1500 m in elevation in thick, wet broadleaf forest just below the pine forest zone. The canyon is narrow, relatively dark, rather long, with smooth, nearly vertical sides in several parts. The floor of the canyon is covered with tree ferns, moss, vines, and other vegetation typical of humid forest. The walls of the canyon were damp, but the water did not appear to flow from anywhere in particular.

The first two nests both had adult Black Swifts (*Cypseloides niger*) sitting on them. One was about 3 m from the ground, the second only about 2 m above the canyon floor, and were about 3 m apart. Both nests were built of dark brown moss attached directly to the canyon wall. One bird was photographed on the nest by the senior author; this color photograph will appear in Keith *et al.* (in press) and represents the first proved breeding record for Hispaniola. Examination of the contents of the two nests revealed one egg in the first nest and one hatchling in the second nest. Further investigation revealed 11 more nests on the canyon wall, some of which appeared to be abandoned and may have been used in prior years. Other nests also had adults sitting on them; all the other nests were relatively close together.

The site is not part of the nearby National Park system. It is hoped that measures can be taken by local authorities to protect the site and a buffer zone of surrounding property.

The Palmchat (*Dulus dominicus*) has previously been reported only nesting in trees, most often Royal Palms (*Roystonea hispaniolana*), or very rarely on poles. Usually the large stick nests are used by several pairs. Here we report an exceptional nest built on a rock in the ocean just off the edge of the shoreline at the old Alcoa Hotel at Cabo Rojo, Pedernales Province (Fig. 1). This appears to be the first documented terrestrial nest of this species. The nest was discovered by John Prather and was photographed by the senior author in October 2001. Only a single pair of birds was observed entering and leaving the nest.



Fig. 1. Palmchat nest on a seaside rock, Dominican Republic.



Fig. 2. Golden Swallow in nest within a crevice along the side of an open pit bauxite mine, Acetillar, Sierra de Bahoruco, Dominican Republic.

Golden Swallows (*Tachycineta euchrysea*) typically nest in old woodpecker holes, more rarely under the eaves of houses or just inside cave entrances, and are often colonial. Here we report an

unusual nest site of a single pair in a crevice only about 0.2 m above ground level along the side of an open pit bauxite mine at 1200 m elevation at Acetillar, Sierra de Bahoruco, Pedernales Province (Fig. 2). The entrance to the mine is about 350 m off the main Acetillar road and the nest site is about 150 m inside the mine entrance at the far end of the pit. The pit is surrounded by pine forest. Vinicio Mejia and the senior author discovered the nest on 23 June 2002 after Marisabel Paulino had become suspicious earlier that month that the birds might have a nest nearby. This appears to be the first reported virtually terrestrial nest of this species.

#### LITERATURE CITED

KEITH, A. R., J. W. WILEY, S. C. LATTA, AND J. A. OTTENWALDER. In press. The birds of Hispaniola — Dominican Republic and Haiti. BOU Checklist No. 21. London: British Ornithologists' Union.