

Do juvenile Cinereous Mourners *Laniocera hypopyrra* mimic large, hairy caterpillars?

Johan Ingels and Mathieu Entraygues

Most juvenile birds exhibit cryptic plumage to mislead predators relying on vision to find their prey. So why should juveniles of such an inconspicuous, dull greyish bird as the Cinereous Mourner *Laniocera hypopyrra* possess a dramatically conspicuous plumage? Are they mimicking a large unpalatable or toxic hairy caterpillar? We publish here the first photos of such a bizarre-looking juvenile in the wild...

The Cinereous Mourner *Laniocera hypopyrra* is widely distributed over the greater part of Amazonia, with a geographically disjunct population in the central Atlantic Forest (Snow 2004).

Obvious confusion exists concerning the different plumages of this widespread but little-known bird. Three distinct plumages, from a juvenile plumage through an intermediate to a final adult plumage are now recognised. Adults are mainly ashy grey above, slightly darker on the wings and tail. The throat and upper breast are slightly paler grey, the rest of the underparts pale grey, faintly barred darker grey. In all plumages, the median and greater wing-coverts have pale cinnamon terminal spots forming two very characteristic broken wingbars, and the tertial and tail tips also have pale cinnamon spots (Fig. 1). Yellow (in juveniles and immatures) to bright orange-cinnamon (in adults) pectoral tufts are frequently covered by the folded wings (Restall *et al.* 2006).

Cinereous Mourner fledglings were not described until d'Horta *et al.* published a description of the gaudy plumages of the juvenile of this mourner and of the related Brazilian Laniisoma *Laniisoma elegans*, illustrated with photos of specimens of juveniles of both species (d'Horta *et al.* 2012). The description of the juvenile plumage of *Laniocera hypopyrra* is based on a specimen collected on 6 September 2002 by Fernando Mendonça d'Horta in the understorey of disturbed *terra firme* forest at Igarapé Mutum, Juruti, Pará in east Amazonian Brazil (02°36'S

56°13'W), now housed at the Museu Paraense Emílio Goeldi in Belém, Brazil (MPEG 56.746) (d'Horta *et al.* 2012).

In Peru, Cinereous Mourners are uncommon but widespread in the eastern lowlands, primarily in *terra firme*, sometimes also in seasonally flooded and swampy forests (Schulenberg *et al.* 2007). In the wild, the first juvenile Cinereous Mourner accompanied by an adult was seen by Dave Branagh, Andrew Marshall, Richard Rowland, Graham Speight, Mick Turton and Ramiro Yabar at the Los Amigos Biological Station in south-east Peru (12°34'S 70°06'W) on 7 August 2012 (G. M. Kirwan pers. comm.).

In French Guiana, Cinereous Mourners are uncommon in the undisturbed forests of the interior (Tostain *et al.* 1992). On 7 October 2012, ME found a bizarre-plumaged juvenile bird (Figs. 2 and 3) at the entrance to the Patawa waterfall trail, along road D6 on the Montagne de Kaw (04°32'N 52°09'W). The juvenile was perched, c.1.5 m high, in the vegetation of the forest edge. Photos were taken and published on the website of the GEPOG (Groupe d'Étude et de Protection des Oiseaux en Guyane) and, guided by the typical cinnamon spots on the median and greater wing-coverts, and on the tertials and rectrices, members of this group suggested that the fledgling could be a juvenile Cinereous Mourner. Meanwhile, the publication of the paper by d'Horta *et al.* (2012) was mentioned on the Internet and that paper confirmed the correct identification.

Juvenile *Laniocera hypopyrra* already possesses grey remiges and rectrices, typical of an adult,

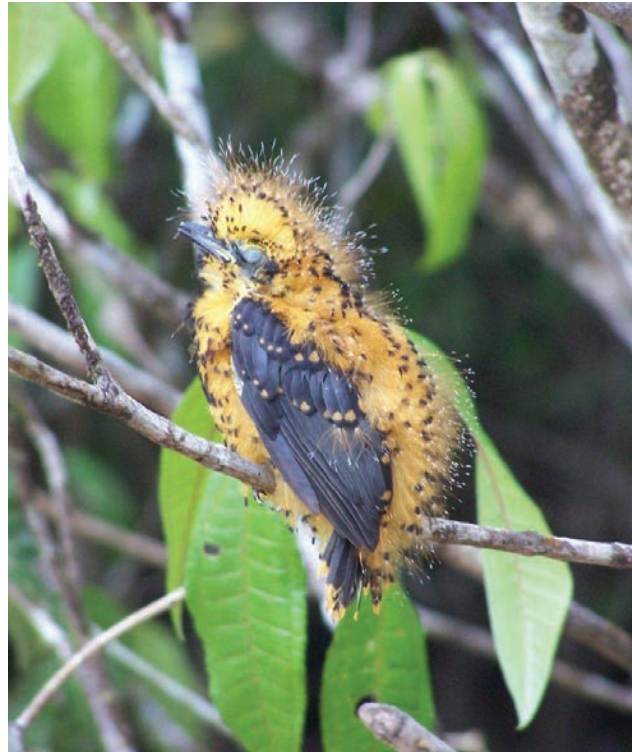


Figure 1. Adult Cinereous Mourner *Laniocera hypopyrra*. Photo taken near Papaïchton, French Guiana, December 2007 (Thierry Nogaro). This photo clearly shows the pale cinnamon terminal spots on the median and greater wing-coverts forming two very characteristic broken wingbars, and the pale cinnamon spots on tertials and tail tips.

Figures 2, 3 & 4. Juvenile Cinereous Mourner *Laniocera hypopyrra*. Photos taken on Montagne de Kaw, French Guiana, 7 October 2012 (Mathieu Entraygues).

and the median and greater wing-coverts, tertials and rectrices already show cinnamon spots on their tips. The entire body is covered with orange feathers with black terminal spots. The head is covered by a crest, formed of orange feathers with black terminal spots. Some feathers in the crest have distal extensions, composed by up to six orange filaments, possessing white distal and proximal portions. Some of the dorsal feathers show the same structure (Fig. 4) (d'Horta *et al.* 2012).

D'Horta *et al.* (2012) consider the gaudy plumage of juvenile Cinereous Mourners to be a defence against predators by Batesian mimicry of a large, hairy caterpillar, suggesting toxic or unpalatable food.

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JOHAN INGELS

Galgenberglaan 9, BE-9070 Destelbergen, Belgium.
E-mail: johan.ingels@skynet.be

MATHIEU ENTAYGUES

223, route de Bourda, FR-97300 Cayenne, France.
E-mail: entayguesmathieu@gmail.com

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