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**Spot-tailed Nightjar  
*Caprimulgus maculicaudus*  
nesting in French Guiana**

Spot-tailed Nightjar *Caprimulgus maculicaudus* is found discontinuously from south-east Mexico to south-east Brazil<sup>1</sup>.

It occurs mainly in savannas and marshes with scattered thickets and trees, but also in bushy pastures, grassy clearings in woodland, forest edges and recently burnt areas<sup>2,3,5</sup>. Its natural history is poorly known<sup>7</sup>.

*C. maculicaudus* is common in savannas, marshes and ricefields in coastal French Guiana<sup>9</sup>. There are no reports from the forested interior.

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Figure 1. Spot-tailed Nightjar *Caprimulgus maculicaudus* chick, near Mana, French Guiana, September 2009 (Sylvain Uriot)

This nightjar is very common along road D22 between Mana and Awala-Yalimapo and towards the settlement Les Hattes, in north-west French Guiana. In the dry season, the low weedy vegetation on both sides of the road and under a high-voltage line on one side is regularly burnt. On 27–30 September 2009, along a stretch of c.15 km of the D22, we counted 20–30 *C. maculicaudus*. Near midnight on 27 September, SU trapped an adult male using a butterfly net. The bird was brooding a chick, c.2–3 days old (Fig. 1). The nest was on bare ground, c.1.5 m from the road, which had been burnt c.3–4 weeks earlier. The egg must have been laid shortly thereafter, as the incubation period for small caprimulgids is estimated at 2–3 weeks<sup>2,5</sup>. The chick was covered with blackish down, with brownish-buff markings. The underparts were pale dusky marked buffy brown, except for the pale, buffy-brown belly. The bill was dark horn, the feet greyish and the irides dark. This description agrees with that of a chick found in 1956 in Veracruz, Mexico<sup>10</sup>. It blended very well with its surroundings. On 8 November 2009, a pair of Spot-tailed Nightjars with a fledged juvenile was flushed on the Pointe Isère, on the right bank of the Mana River opposite Awala-Yalimapo (E. Weissenbacher, J. Hahn & M. Maussin pers. comm.).

Little is known about the breeding biology of Spot-tailed Nightjar. The chick we found was the first for French Guiana.

In Mexico and Surinam, this nightjar prefers bare ground in burnt areas to lay its eggs<sup>4,10</sup>. Clutch size is reportedly two<sup>2,3</sup>. Holyoak<sup>5</sup> stated that full clutches apparently comprise two eggs, but it is uncertain if some reports of single eggs refer to one-egg clutches or incomplete clutches. In Surinam, of four clutches, two were of one egg and two of two eggs<sup>4</sup>. Tostain *et al.*<sup>9</sup> mentioned a female with two fledged juveniles near Kaw. Although a sample of eight clutches for Mexico, Surinam and French Guiana is small, we believe that complete clutches of one and two eggs are possible. This phenomenon is also observed in Pauraque *Nyctidromus albicollis* for which one-egg clutches are known in Surinam, French Guiana and northern Brazil, and two-egg clutches elsewhere in its range<sup>2,3,5,6</sup>. In French Guiana and Surinam, with similar rainfall patterns, all nests have been in September–December, i.e., the dry and early rainy season<sup>4,8,9</sup>, unsurprising for a ground-nesting caprimulgid.

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