

Description of the first nest of Green Araçari (*Pteroglossus viridis*) for French Guiana

PRIMERA DESCRIPCIÓN DEL NIDO DEL TILINGO LIMÓN (*PTEROGLOSSUS VIRIDIS*) EN LA GUAYANA FRANCESA

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Abstract

The Green Araçari (*Pteroglossus viridis*) is rather common and widespread in northeastern South America. We describe the first nest of this araçari found in French Guiana. The nest was an old cavity made by woodpeckers in a dead awarra palm (*Astrocaryum vulgare*), situated along the road D15 in the Marécages de Matiti in the coastal region.

Keywords: *Astrocaryum vulgare*, awarra palm, lowland forest, Ramphastidae, reproductive biology.

Resumen

El Tilingo Limón (*Pteroglossus viridis*) es bastante común y ampliamente distribuido en el noreste de Suramérica. Describimos el primer nido de este tilingo encontrado en la Guayana Francesa. El nido estaba en una cavidad excavada por un pájaro carpintero en un tronco muerto de una palma zancón (*Astrocaryum vulgare*), situado a lo largo de la carretera D15 en los Marécages de Matiti en la región costera.

Palabras claves: *Astrocaryum vulgare*, biología reproductiva, bosques de tierras bajas, palma zanca, Ramphastidae.

The Green Araçari (*Pteroglossus viridis*) is one of the smallest Ramphastidae. It is widespread and locally common in southeastern Venezuela, the Guianas and northeastern Brazil. Its preferred habitat is lowland forest up to 800 m.a.s.l. including sand-ridge forest, riverine forest in savannas, tall second-growth forest, plantations, and fruiting trees isolated from but near forest (Short & Horne 2001, 2002). In French Guiana, Green Araçarís are widespread, however uncommon in a variety of forest types with a preference for secondary growth along forest edges and around inhabited and other man-made clearings (Tostain *et al.* 1992).

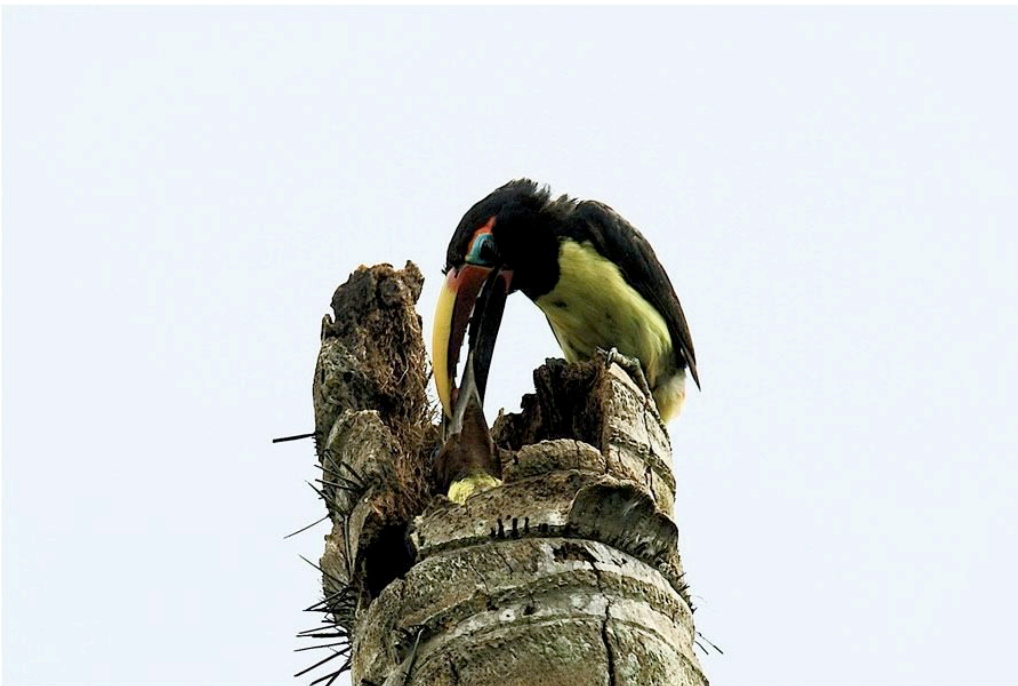
Very little is known about the reproductive biology of this species in this part of South America. For instance, a quick search of the literature produced no detailed description of a nest of a Green Araçari, only that they prefer old cavities and nest holes made by large

woodpeckers, often in isolated trees, probably to avoid mammalian and reptilian predation (Short & Horne 2001, 2002). Amongst the available information is a photo of a female Green Araçari entering a nest hole in a large tree shown on page 242 in Short & Horne (2002). We describe here a nest of Green Araçarís, the first ever found in French Guiana.

On April 23rd, VP and Tanguy Deville saw a female Green Araçari on top of a dead awarra palm (*Astrocaryum vulgare*) with an orange fruit in her bill, later identified as an awarra fruit. The dead awarra palm was an isolated hollow stump with a height of 5.5 to 6 m. The upper part of the dead trunk (with a diameter of ~25 cm) was hollow and open at the top. Around 20 cm below the top was a hole with a diameter of ~7 to 8 cm, which was previously part of an old woodpecker nest. The top had probably broken off at the level where the

construction of a nest hole by woodpeckers had weakened the dead palm. The hollow stump stood ~10 m from the road in a small clearing (5°08'N, 52°37'W) used to grow fruits and vegetables. It was situated in the Marécages de Matiti in the coastal region of French Guiana, north of the road D15 connecting the road RN1 and the Dégrad Guatémala, a landing stage on the right

bank of the Kourou River, opposite the town of Kourou. The “marécages” are a ~50 km² area of marshes and savannas with remnants of low forest and a few clearings and farmyards, where. In addition parts of the savannas are converted into meadows for cattle grazing. The area is bordered by the Kourou River, the road RN1, and the Atlantic Ocean.



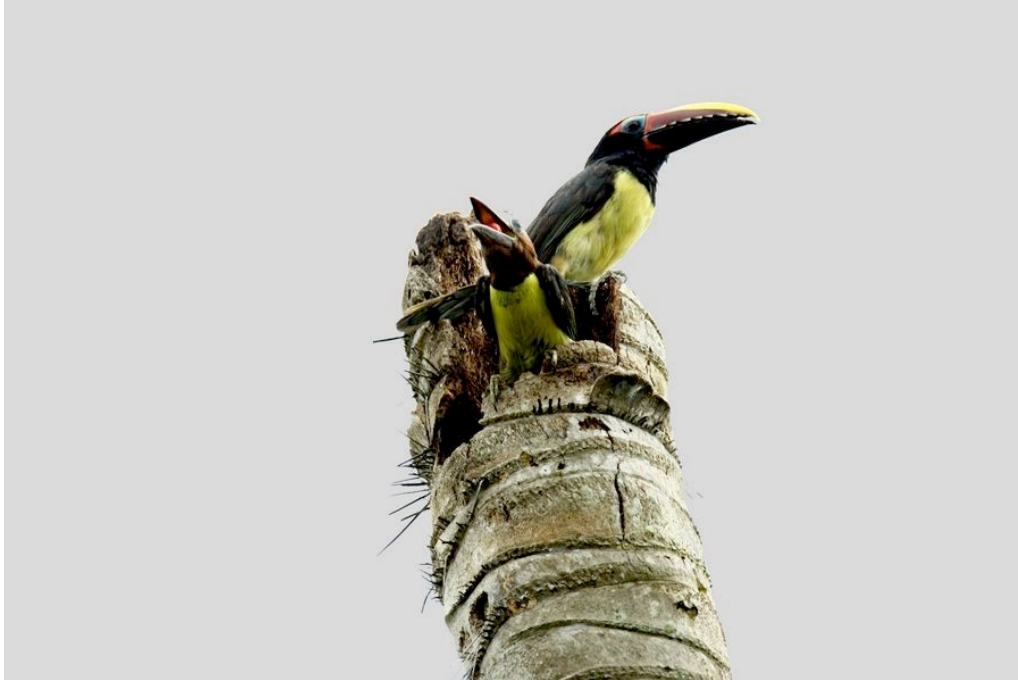


Figure 1, 2 & 3. Male Green Araçari (*Pteroglossus viridis*) arriving at the nest with awarra fruits to feed a nestling (Photos: Michel Giraud-Audine).



Fig. 4. Nestling Green Araçari (*Pteroglossus viridis*) looking through a hole of the old woodpecker nest tree (Photo: Michel Giraud-Audine).

During the last days of April 2008, both VP and Tanguy Deville observed at several occasions, a male or a female Green Araçari with an awarra fruit in their bill on top of the dead awarra palm, indicating that both adults fed the young. On May 5th 2008, MGA photographed a male Green Araçari feeding awarra fruits to a near-fledgling sitting in the open top of the same dead palm (Fig. 1, 2 & 3). On May 9th, at least one, maybe two young were still present and fed, however on May 10th the nest was empty. The young had most likely fledged. The juvenile Green Araçari had a female-like colour pattern, but was less colourful. Their bills were much shorter than that of the adults, with the mandible horn-coloured and the maxilla yellowish grey (Fig. 4). If the mean bill length of males and females is 81 cm and 72 cm respectively (Short & Horne 2001), the bills of the juveniles were ~50 cm long, calculated with the aid of Fig. 1. We presumed the nestlings fledged on May 10th and if we accept an incubation and nestling period of

respectively ~17 and 43 - 45 days (Short & Horne 2001), the egg(s) was / were laid around March 10th.

Tostain *et al.* (1992) mention the observation of a fledgling being fed on February 29th 1988 along the Piste de Saint-Elie (~5°17'N, 53°03'W), west of Sinnamary, also in the coastal region of French Guiana. In this case, the egg(s) was (were) laid during the very last days of December 1987. The observations of an active nest and of a fledgling being fed by adults (Tostain *et al.* 1992) are the only known data about the breeding biology of the Green Araçari in French Guiana. As mentioned in the literature, these small araçarís seem to prefer old nests of larger woodpeckers such as *Dryocopus* and *Campephilus* species, which are similar in size to Green Araçarís. However, further studies are required to determine if these araçarís use old woodpecker nests for roosting or for nesting.

Acknowledgements

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