

## NOTAS DE CAMPO/FIELD NOTES

**Esmeraldas Antbird *Sipia nigricauda*, nest and egg**

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The genus *Myrmeciza* (Thamnophilidae), has long been recognized as polyphyletic, and has now been divided into 12 genera in accordance with molecular data, vocal differences, and nest architecture (Greeney *et al.*, 2013; Isler *et al.*, 2013). This new taxonomic organization included the resurrection of the genus *Sipia* Hellmayr, 1924, now considered to include four monotypic species: Dull-mantled Antbird *S. laemosticta*, Magdalena Antbird *S. palliata*, Esmeraldas Antbird *S. nigricauda*, and Stub-tailed Antbird *S. berlepschi*. The nests of *S. nigricauda* and *S. berlepschi* have yet to be described, while the nests of *S. laemosticta* and *S. palliata* are both deep, rim-suspended cups built almost entirely of thin, dark fibers, with little or no external decoration (Greeney *et al.*, 2013). The eggs of *S. nigricauda*, based on a single two-egg clutch from Ecuador, have been described as white with a pinkish tinge and marked with dark cinnamon and lavender scrawls and blotches (Schönwetter & Meise, 1967). Collection data for this clutch, however, are incomplete, and Schönwetter & Meise (1967) assigned them to *S. nigricauda* with some reservation. Herein we provide the first description of the nest of *S. nigricauda* and the first unambiguous description of the eggs. Fieldwork was conducted just west of Mindo, Province of Pichincha, western Ecuador (-0.0646, -78.7896; 1400 m a.s.l.).

On 25 July 2014, at 12h15, HFG flushed an adult male *S. nigricauda* from a nest containing a single egg (Fig. 1a). At 10h00 the following day the egg was cold, and no adult was on the nest. The egg was creamy white, with thickly overlapping blotches and short scrawls of cinnamon, concentrated near the larger pole. It showed no signs of embryonic development when held up a light, weighed 4.83 g, and measured 26.3 × 17.6 mm. We visited the nest twice daily, early- to mid-morning and again in the mid- to late-afternoon, until our final visit at 14h30 on 28 July, but saw no indication that a second egg was laid. An adult was found warming the egg on only four of ten visits to the nest, on all occasions allowing HFG to approach to within 1.5–1 m of the nest before flushing. On the single occasion that the female (Fig. 1b) was flushed (06h30, 27 July), she leapt swiftly and silently from the nest and made a direct, downward flight into thick undergrowth c. 3 m from the nest. The male's departure from the nest was similar on one occasion (12h15, 25 July). On two additional visits, however, the male dropped directly downward from the nest and made a noticeably fluttery flight, with tail spread, flying c. 15 cm above the stream until it reached thick vegetation. Instead of immediately disappearing into the foliage, he remained within view and hopped between several exposed stems and roots, 4–5 times, appearing to feign injury by fluttering his wings, spreading his tail, and fluffing out the contour feathers of his back and rump. This latter action exposed the bright white interscapular feathers that are mostly or entirely concealed while foraging. The whole “display” was brief, and within 10–15 s the male disappeared into the vegetation.

The nest was situated 50 cm above a small, c. 2 m-wide stream, nestled into a tangle of the small branches of several herbaceous plants (*Rubus* sp.; Rosaceae, *Pilea* sp.; Urticaceae) growing from the vertical stream bank, 20 cm behind the nest. The nest (Fig. 1a, 1b) was a deep, open cup, suspended predominantly by the rim from two nearly horizontal stems, on opposite sides of the nest. Numerous additional small branches of the surrounding plants were partially woven into the sides of the nest, providing additional stability and increasing the resemblance of the nest to a naturally accumulated cluster of hanging detritus. The entire nest was largely composed of long, thin, flexible rootlets, with a poorly differentiated lining of finer, less branched rootlets that provided a smooth interior (Fig. 1a). Much of the additional material incorporated within the walls of the nest

(e.g., dead leaves, moss) appeared to have been woven into the nest incidentally, during the process of weaving rootlets around the supporting substrate. Measurements of the nest were: outer diameter, 12–13 cm; outer height 9.5–10.5 cm; inner diameter 7.5 cm; inner depth 7–8 cm.

The egg of *S. nigricauda* found here was consistent in both size and coloration with those described by Schönwetter & Meise (1967), but represents the first confirmed egg description for the species. The nest, in being a deep cup of dark, flexible fibers that is largely suspended by the rim, is remarkably consistent with descriptions of the nests of *S. laemosticta* and *S. palliata* (Greeney *et al.*, 2013), reinforcing the hypothesis that *S. nigricauda* is correctly placed as a congener of these two species.

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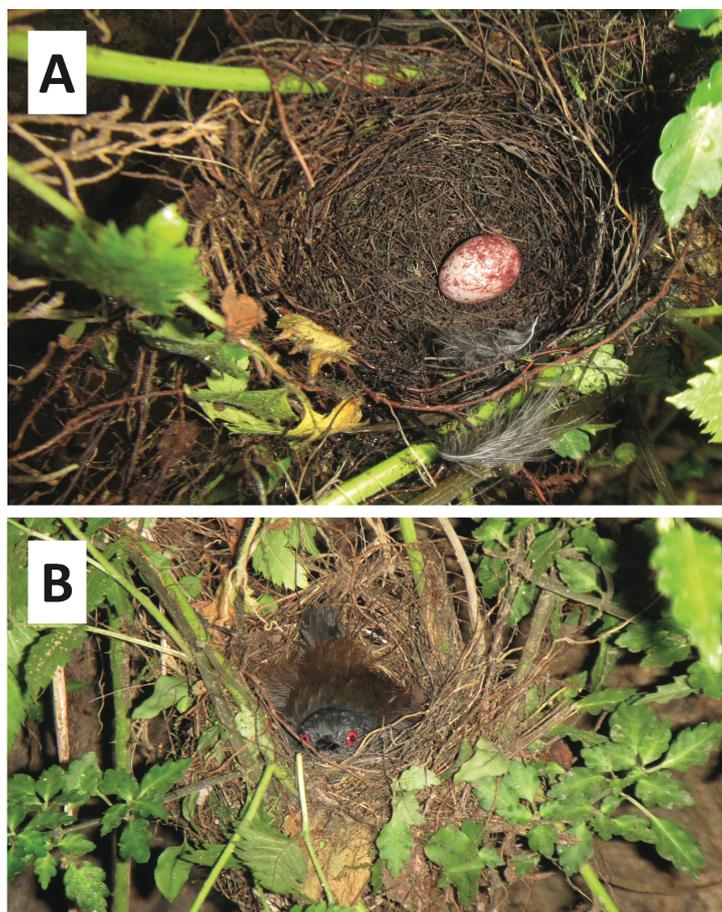


Figure 1: a) Nest and egg of Esmeraldas Antbird *Sipia nigricauda*, 25 July 2014, near Mindo, Pichincha, Ecuador. b) adult female covering a single egg in her nest, 27 July 2014 (Harold F. Greeney).