

Fruit consumption by *Colaptes campestris* (Aves, Picidae) at Emas National Park, Brazil

Dárius Pukenis Tubelis

Departamento de Ecologia, Instituto de Biociências, Universidade de São Paulo
CEP 05508-900, São Paulo - SP, Brazil
dtubelis@yahoo.com

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Resumo

Consumo de frutos por *Colaptes campestris* (Aves, Picidae) no Parque Nacional das Emas, Brasil.

Embora pica-paus sejam basicamente insetívoros, algumas espécies alimentam-se de frutos e flores ocasionalmente ou de maneira regular. A maioria dos registros de consumo de frutos por espécies do gênero *Colaptes* envolveu *C. melanochloros*; poucos foram de *C. campestris*. Este estudo teve como objetivo comentar sobre frugivoria por *C. campestris* no Parque Nacional das Emas, Goiás. No início de março de 2007, dois indivíduos foram vistos alimentando-se de frutos de bate-caixa (*Palicourea rigida*, Rubiaceae) em um trecho de campo sujo. Estes são os primeiros registros de consumo de frutos de espécies nativas por *Colaptes campestris* no Cerrado.

Unitermos: Cerrado, *Colaptes campestris*, dieta, frugivoria, *Palicourea rigida*

Abstract

Although woodpeckers are primarily insectivorous birds, some species feed on fruits and flowers occasionally or regularly. Most records of fruit consumption by *Colaptes* species have involved *C. melanochloros*; there have been few records of *C. campestris*. This study aimed to report on frugivory by *C. campestris* at Emas National Park, Goiás. In early March 2007, two individuals were seen feeding on fruits of *Palicourea rigida* (Rubiaceae) in a patch of *campo sujo* vegetation. These are the first records of consumption of fruits of native species by *Colaptes campestris* in Cerrado.

Key words: Cerrado, *Colaptes campestris*, diet, frugivory, *Palicourea rigida*

Woodpeckers (Picidae) feed mainly on arthropods and their larvae (Sick, 1997; Winkler and Christie, 2002). While most species consume only invertebrates, others might also feed on plant resources such as nectar and fruits (Sick, 1997; Rocca et al., 2006; Sigrist, 2006). Fruit consumption by Neotropical woodpeckers has been reported most often for species of the genera *Celeus*, *Melanerpes*, *Campephilus* and *Veniliornis*

(Schubart et al., 1965; Kattan, 1988; Sick, 1997; Ruiz et al., 2000; Cazetta et al., 2002; de la Peña and Pensiero, 2003; Pizo, 2004; Sigrist, 2006).

In relation to *Colaptes* species, studies mentioning fruit consumption have usually involved *C. melanochlorus* (Schubart et al., 1965; Sick, 1997; Francisco and Galetti, 2001; Sigrist, 2006). On the other hand, most publications on *C. campestris* have reported only

the consumption of insects, especially ants and termites (Sick, 1958; Schubart et al., 1965; Short, 1969 and 1975; Antas and Cavalcanti, 1988; Dubs, 1992; Winkler and Christie, 2002). Other insect groups such as beetles, butterflies, wasps and bees have been considered as occasional food items of *C. campestris* (Moojen et al., 1941; Raw, 1997; Sick, 1997). Besides being less frequent, records of fruit consumption by *C. campestris* have usually involved exotic or unidentified plant species (Moojen et al., 1941; Pizo, 2004; Sigrist, 2006).

This study aims to report on the consumption of fruits by *Colaptes campestris* in a Cerrado's reserve. Cerrado is the ecosystem that dominates central Brazil (Eiten, 1972). In most preserved landscapes, grasslands and savanna woodlands dominate uplands, while vegetation associated with water courses, such as gallery forests and marshes, occur in valleys (Eiten, 1972). Among the most dominant physiognomies are shrubby grasslands, called *campo sujo*. They have a continuous herbaceous stratum, numerous shrubs, and scattered trees (Eiten, 1972). The regional climate is tropical and is marked by two well-defined seasons, wet and dry. Most of the annual precipitation (1,200 to 2,000 mm) falls between October and March (Assad 1994).

Field observations were made at Emas National Park, Goiás state, western Brazil. On 1st March 2007, at 3:25pm, a group of four *C. campestris* was found resting on the ground in *campo sujo* vegetation. On approach, all of them moved to a nearby unidentified tree. Two of them began to emit songs of alarm, while the other two flew about 10m and perched on a 80cm tall shrub (*Palicourea rigida*, Rubiaceae) harboring numerous fruits (Figure 1). Then, these two individuals began eating fruits from this shrub. During a period of about 70s, one of them ate five and the other eight. After this observation period, an approach was made in an attempt to take better photographs, but they flew away.

As birds swallow whole fruits, this woodpecker species could be considered as a potential disperser of *P. rigida*. And as its fruiting season occurs between January and March at Emas National Park (personal communication), the fruits of *P. rigida* might be important for groups containing young woodpeckers born in the previous months (November-December).



FIGURE 1: *Colaptes campestris* feeding on fruits of *Palicourea rigida* in a grassland patch at Emas National Park, Brazil, in March 2007.

All previous records of consumption of fruits by *C. campestris* have involved exotic plant species such as avocados and grapes in Brazil (Sigrist, 2006), unidentified seeds in the Pantanal wetland (Moojen et al., 1941), unidentified fruits in the Atlantic forest of southeastern Brazil (Pizo, 2004), and cactus fruits in the Venezuelan semi-arid landscapes (Soriano et al., 1999). Therefore, these are the first records of *C. campestris* foraging on fruits of native plant species in the Cerrado region.

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