

The nest and egg of Dusky Piha *Lipaugus fuscocinereus* in eastern Ecuador

Of the seven species of pihás in the genus *Lipaugus*⁵, nest descriptions have been published for just three^{3,4,6}. Dusky Piha *Lipaugus fuscocinereus* (Fig. 1) is a monotypic species distributed from northern Colombia to northern Peru^{1,2,5}. It is the largest of the genus, and inhabits montane forest and adjacent second growth at 1,700–3,000 m^{2,5}, being the only piha occurring high on Andean slopes. Here, we describe the nest and egg of Dusky Piha for the first time.

We discovered the nest on 28 March 2008 at the Yanayacu Biological Station and Center for Creative Studies (00°35'S 77°53'W), at 2,400 m. Yanayacu is located 5 km west of Cosanga, in prov. Napo, Ecuador, adjacent to the reserve of



Figure 1. Adult Dusky Piha *Lipaugus fuscocinereus*, incubating at a nest near Yanayacu Biological Station, prov. Napo, Ecuador, 30 March 2008 (R. A. Gelis)



Figure 2. Nest with complete clutch of Dusky Piha *Lipaugus fuscocinereus*, Yanayacu Biological Station, prov. Napo, Ecuador, 28 March 2008; inset shows detail of egg (J. Simbaña)

Cabañas San Isidro. The nest was in an area that had been selectively logged and heavily impacted c.15 years previously. The canopy was fairly well developed, but only c.10–15 m tall, and was dominated by *Vismia* (Clusiaceae) and *Miconia* (Melastomataceae), with a sparse, fairly open understorey.

The nest was a flattened cup composed mostly of tightly curled, dried vine tendrils, and built atop a sparse platform of long sticks (Fig. 2). The nest was supported by the horizontal fork of a *Vismia tomentosa* tree, c.8.5 m above ground. The supporting tree was c.10 m tall, with a 15 cm dbh. The three supporting forks of the branch (3-cm diameter) were 1.5, 2.5 and 3.0 cm in diameter. The nest was c.1.5 m below the tree's crown, and 2 m from the main trunk. Whilst the area immediately around the nest was fairly open, and the nest was visible at most angles from below, it was well sheltered by dense foliage above. The saucer-like nest measured 8 cm tall outside and 15 cm wide, with a few sticks extending an additional 10–15 cm. Internally, the cup was 12 cm in diameter and 2.5 cm deep.

At the time of discovery, the nest contained a single egg, which was still present two days later. The egg was pale beige with coarse brown and lavender flecking and splotching, heaviest at the largest end (Fig. 2). It measured 39.4 × 29.0 mm and weighed 15.77 g.

While we remained motionless below the nest, a single adult would approach the area, perching for 2–5 minutes before flying to the nest. Although obviously aware of our presence, it appeared undisturbed. Nevertheless, if we made any movement or noise, the adult would leave the nest quickly, dropping downward and swooping directly over our heads, perhaps in a distraction or threat display. After departing the nest, the adult would remain in the area, feeding rapidly for several minutes on small *Hyeronima* (Euphorbiaceae) fruits. If we remained quiet, however, it would return to the nest.

The nest of Dusky Piha is very similar, in placement and form, to the nests described for other *Lipaugus*^{3,4,6}. It appears most similar, in the use of curled vine tendrils, to the detailed descriptions given by Skutch³ for Rufous Piha *L. unirufus*. Likewise, the egg of Dusky Piha is similar in appearance to those of the other two species for which descriptions are available^{3,6}.

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