

Deforestation and hunting seem likely to have contributed to the poor status of this low-density but seemingly unspecialized cuckoo in Haiti and the Dominican Republic, but while there is little hope for its survival in the former, it occurs in four protected areas in the latter; nevertheless it requires fuller study and the implementation of existing plans for further key site conservation.

DISTRIBUTION The Rufous-breasted Cuckoo is endemic to Hispaniola, occurring in both Haiti (including Gonave Island) and the Dominican Republic. In the following account coordinates are taken from DMATC (1972, 1973).

Haiti There are very few records from the country.

Gonave Island Five birds were collected somewhere on the island in February 1918 and four at Etroites (18°52'N 72°52'W) and Anse-à-Galets in March 1920 (Wetmore and Swales 1931); a bird was taken in the hills above Anse-à-Galets in July 1927 (Danforth 1929); there are two skins simply labelled "Gonave Island", February and May 1928 (in ANSP). No birds were observed on the island in February 1985, on a walked transect from Pointe-à-Racquettes to Anse-à-Galets (M. A. McDonald *in litt.* 1991).

Mainland Three birds were taken near Moustique (19°49'N 72°57'W) in March 1917 (Wetmore and Swales 1931), and one bird was observed c.15 km down the road from Seguin (18°19'N 72°14'W) to Marigot (18°14'N 72°19'W) in summer 1983 (M. A. McDonald *in litt.* 1991).

Dominican Republic Records below are organized by province, roughly from west to east.

Dajabón Records are from near Loma Cabrera (19°25'N 71°37'W), where birds were frequently seen and two nests found in April 1983 (A. Stockton de Dod *in litt.* 1991).

Elias Peña Localities are: Los Cerezos (untraced) on the slopes of the río Artibonito (for which see IGU 1979), undated (Stockton de Dod 1978); between Pedro Santana (19°06'N 71°42'W) and Bánica, undated (A. Stockton de Dod *in litt.* 1991); Río Limpio (19°15'N 71°31'W) and Loma Nalga de Maco (19°13'N 71°29'W), recently (SEA/DVS 1992).

Independencia A population once occurred in a wooded area (now cleared) near La Descubierta (18°34'N 71°44'W) (A. Stockton de Dod *in litt.* 1991). Two birds were observed above Duvergé (18°32'N 71°31'W), two more at Puerto Escondido (18°19'N 71°34'W) and a single bird elsewhere at the base of Sierra de Baoruco, all of them in April 1987 (J. E. Pierson *in litt.* 1991); Stockton de Dod (1978, 1981) also mentioned Puerto Escondido as one of the places where the species is to be found and where a bird was taken in 1972; Bond (1984) reported a nest west of Puerto Escondido in March 1976.

San Juan A male was taken at a locality 7 km west of Vallejuelo (18°39'N 71°20'W) in 1963 (Schwartz and Klinikowski 1965); and a male was taken at arroyo Loro (18°49'N 71°16'W) in March 1930 (Moltoni 1932).

Azua The species has been recorded at Orégano Chiquito (18°31'N 70°53'W), undated (Stockton de Dod 1981); and an extensive series was obtained at Túbano (see map in Wetmore and Swales 1931) in December 1916 and February 1917 (Wetmore and Swales 1931).

La Vega At Hondo (Hondo Valle in OG 1963b, at 18°53'N 70°50'W) specimens were taken in May 1919 (Wetmore and Swales 1931); near Constanza (18°55'N 70°45'W) birds were collected in April and May 1919, and at Corralito (untraced, but near Constanza) in April 1919 (Wetmore and Swales 1931). One bird was taken at Loma Tina (18°47'N 70°44'W) in January 1917 (Wetmore and Swales 1931); the species was recorded once between Miranda (untraced, but not far from La Vega, at 19°13'N 70°31'W) and La Vega, sometime between December 1906 and April 1907 (Verrill and Verrill 1909).

Peravia Two birds were obtained at San José de Ocoa (18°33'N 70°30'W) and three at Honduras (18°22'N 70°26'W) in 1895 (Cory 1895, Wetmore and Swales 1931); the species has been recorded at Baní (18°17'N 70°20'W), undated (Stockton de Dod 1981), and at Valdesia (18°24'N 70°16'W) in 1971, 1981 and 1982 (A. Stockton de Dod *in litt.* 1991).

POPULATION The limited evidence indicates a strong decline in overall numbers and range at least during the twentieth century.

Haiti The Rufous-breasted Cuckoo has been considered "very local" on the mainland (Bond 1956b) and

is now believed to be extremely rare there (M. A. McDonald *in litt.* 1986). On Gonave Island it was reported as “not uncommon” in February 1928 (Bond 1928a); Wetmore and Swales (1931) reported five birds collected in February 1918 and four in March 1920.

Dominican Republic Judging from the number of specimens taken early in the 1900s (see Distribution) the Rufous-breasted Cuckoo appears once to have been at least locally common, although by the 1970s it was believed to be very rare and on the way to extinction (Stockton de Dod 1981). In 1983, however, A. Stockton de Dod *in litt.* (1991) discovered an area near Loma Cabrera where a “good” population of the species was present, birds being “common” and “frequently seen”, two occupied nests being found, while between Bánica and Pedro Santana the species was seen more than twice on one day; nevertheless, she still regarded the species as threatened.

ECOLOGY The Rufous-breasted Cuckoo is found in many different habitat types, from dense broadleaf mountain rainforest to arid lowlands, including dense scrub, patchy broadleaf woodland composed of exotics such as papaya *Carica papaya* and breadfruit *Artocarpus altilis*, yards and gardens (Bond 1928a, 1979, Wetmore and Swales 1931, M. A. McDonald *in litt.* 1991, A. Stockton de Dod *in litt.* 1991). It can be found over a wide range of altitudes but appears to prefer rather dry, deciduous environments (Bond 1979, Stockton de Dod 1981, J. E. Pierson *in litt.* 1991). Its habits are poorly known; it has been observed progressing rapidly through the forest, and appears to prefer the high parts of the trees (Wetmore and Swales 1931, Stockton de Dod 1978).

It feeds on insects (locusts, mantids, bugs and beetles have all been recorded), lizards and small mice (Danforth 1929, Wetmore and Swales 1931, A. Stockton de Dod *in litt.* 1991). The stomach of a bird taken in July 1927 contained lizard remains (92%) and insects (8%) (Danforth 1929).

Reproduction in the species (not a brood-parasite) remains little known: a bird taken near Hondo on 9 May contained an egg ready to lay (Wetmore and Swales 1931); a nest found in late March at Puerto Escondido had a fledging young in May (Bond 1984), and two nests with incubating adults were found in April near Loma Cabrera (A. Stockton de Dod *in litt.* 1991). The nest can be built in any kind of tree that has epiphytes (i.e. bromeliads) or leaves that will conceal the construction (A. Stockton de Dod *in litt.* 1991). The few reported nests were placed about 3-6 m above the ground in a mango *Mangifera* sp. or “jabilla” tree, and the clutch-size according to local people consists of two eggs (Bond 1984, A. Stockton de Dod *in litt.* 1991).

THREATS The Rufous-breasted Cuckoo's apparent scarceness throughout Hispaniola is difficult to attribute to habitat destruction, given the records (see Ecology) from so many different habitats. It is possible, however, that it has certain requirements that are influenced by alterations to habitat, and records from (e.g.) yards, gardens, introduced vegetation, etc., cannot entirely be trusted to indicate that it is adaptable and secure.

Haiti A broad view of habitat loss in the country is in Threats under White-winged Warbler *Xenoligea montana*. In Anse-à-Galets on Gonave extreme deforestation of the nearby hills and ravines has exposed the town to the hazard of flash floods (Paryski *et al.* 1989).

Dominican Republic Notes on habitat loss are in Threats under White-winged Warbler. Like other members of its family, the Rufous-breasted Cuckoo has been considered a medicinal food and is therefore hunted (Wetmore and Swales 1931, A. Stockton de Dod *in litt.* 1991). The impact of pesticides and fertilizers may also have been pronounced in the case of this species (A. Stockton de Dod *in litt.* 1991).

MEASURES TAKEN Some general and specific points are made in the corresponding section under White-winged Warbler, but the Rufous-breasted Cuckoo is not listed in any Haitian wildlife protection law (J. A. Ottenwalder *in litt.* 1992), nor does it occur in either La Visite or Pic Macaya National Parks (Woods and Ottenwalder 1986).

In the Dominican Republic the hunting of the species is prohibited (J. A. Ottenwalder *in litt.* 1992), while more than 10% of the total surface area of the country is within protected areas, and the cuckoo is present in at least three national parks (J. Armando Bermúdez, José del Carmen Ramírez and

Sierra de Baoruco) and one scientific reserve (Valle Nuevo) (J. A. Ottenwalder *in litt.* 1992; also Distribution).

MEASURES PROPOSED More ecological and distributional studies are needed throughout Hispaniola in order to establish an appropriate conservation strategy for this and other threatened species on the island. An overview of the importance of conserving the mountain forests in Hispaniola is in the corresponding section under Chat-tanager *Calyptophilus frugivorus*.