

Dryocopus lineatus (Lineated Woodpecker)

Family: Picidae (Woodpeckers)

Order: Piciformes (Woodpeckers, Toucans, and Jacamars)

Class: Aves (Birds)



Fig. 1. Lineated woodpecker, *Dryocopus lineatus*.

[<http://www.taenos.com/en/itis/lineated-woodpecker/Dryocopus%20lineatus/>, downloaded 17 September 2016]

TRAITS. This is one of the largest species of woodpeckers, at approximately 33cm long (Beauty of Birds, 2011). Males weigh about 211g and females 158g. The upperparts of *D. lineatus* are black with a white stripe down the shoulders; the crest, crown and nape are scarlet. The cheeks have a white line that runs from the base of the bill to the side of neck. The throat is heavily streaked with black (Ffrench, 2012). Males have a bright coloured crimson malar (cheek) streak (Fig. 1). Females have a black fore-crown (Fig. 2), and the breast, flanks, and belly are brown or buff, irregularly barred and spotted with sooty black. Immatures are similar in colour pattern to the adults, however their coloration is duller (Wetmore, 1968). The bills of *D. lineatus* are very strong, straight and chisel-shaped, to aid in pecking and drilling into trees, in order to feed or build their nest (Fig. 3). Their bills are usually grey to black in colour. They also have a long, sticky tongue, which they use to get food, such as termites that may be in very small crevices.

ECOLOGY. The *Dryocopus lineatus* range extends from Mexico to Trinidad and other parts of South America and the Caribbean (Fig. 4) (Short 1970). In Trinidad, it is noted to be a widely distributed resident. It is found in forests and second-growth, at all levels, up to 700m. They have been seen to inhabit large, isolated trees, on the edges of savannas (French, 2012). Their diet mainly consists of insects, such as wood-boring beetles and their larvae, ants and their larvae, caterpillars and orthopterans. These are frequently harvested from *Cecropia* trees. They also consume seeds and fruits from *Heliconia* and *Clusia rosea* (Skutch, 1969). Their eggs are laid in nest cavities, which have been excavated in dead trees. The cavity is about 45cm deep, 13 x 18cm wide, with an entrance about 9cm in diameter (Fig. 3). Approximately 2-4 eggs are laid, however in Trinidad the clutch size is 2-3. Both parents are involved in incubating the eggs. Faecal material is removed from the nest by both parents (Short, 1970).

SOCIAL ORGANIZATION. They typically forage solitarily or in pairs. However, they may also forage in family groups of 4-6 birds (Malekan, 2011). *D. lineatus* have several hole-nesting competitors that take an interest in the woodpecker cavities, such as the collared aracaris (*Pteroglossus torquatus*) and the black-tailed tityra (*Tityra cayana*). Interspecific conflicts may result in the demonstration of threat displays, to protect their nests (Kilham and O'Brien, 1979). They establish their territories by calls.

ACTIVITY. These birds are known to be active in the day. They roost at night in their nest cavities. Both sexes are active foragers. The females tend to forage more, once there is hatchling in the nest (Short, 1970). It is observed that they would fly in pairs and take dust baths on the ground. One would keep watch for any predators on the ground, while the other would take a bath. This is a form of grooming for the *D. lineatus*.

FORAGING BEHAVIOUR. They retrieve their foods by hammering or prying into live and rotting wood. They use their sticky tongues to excavate insects (Short, 1970). Gleaning (taking insects from surfaces) is also commonly used. Lineated woodpeckers tend to forage at all tree heights, on trunks and large limbs, and sometimes on telephone poles. Males tend to have a preference for larger branches than females (Askins, 1983).

COMMUNICATION. These birds are known for their laughing call, "pi-shâ-shâ-shâ-shâ-âh," which ascends, until abruptly descending towards the end (Souza and Santos, 2006). The lineated woodpecker also produces a wick or long call. A loud, far-carrying "wic-wic-wic," that becomes a more intense "wuk wuk wuk" at about 17 notes (Kilham, 1972). Another common call is the sputter call, which can be rendered in various ways, including "squeak-errrrr," "ook-churrrrrr," "chiurrrr" (Slud, 1964); "kay rar-r-r-r-r," "k'rroo" (Skutch, 1969); "keeer" (Short, 1970) or "put-air" (Kilham, 1972). Distressed or injured birds may produce a loud "peee" call (Short, 1970). They also use non-vocal sounds to communicate, such as drumming in a long roll. They drum at a rate of one to three bursts a minute, which seems to be related to communication between pairs and territoriality. They also communicate by rapping (striking wood with hard single blows), usually in response to intruders (Kilham and O'Brien, 1979).

SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR. Female *D. lineatus* typically initiate sexual behaviour towards the males. The female moves to the end of the tree limb, and postures with the rump slightly raised (the invitation pose). While the female heads towards the branch end, the male ascends up the

trunk of the tree, and moves towards the female, until cloacal contact is established. Copulation lasts approximately 6-12 seconds (Kilham and O'Brien, 1979). Females usually incubate the eggs during the day, while the males incubate at nights. The long call may be used before the copulation ritual. Breeding occurs during February-April in Trinidad and Suriname, March-April in Panama, and April-May in Belize (Malekan, 2011).

ANTIPREDATOR BEHAVIOUR. Their nesting behaviour can be looked as an antipredator behaviour, since their nest cavities are excavated in dead trees, at variable heights, from 2-27m above the ground (Malekan, 2011). This can protect their eggs and hatchlings from predators on the ground. Since both parents do most of the feeding, there is always a parent on guard to watch the hatchling. Usually the males are the ones to stay on guard (Short, 1970). If threatened, they display; raising and lowering the crest, flashing wings, and rapping trees, are often used to chase away nest competitors and intruders (Kilham and O'Brien, 1979).

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Fig. 2. Female lineated woodpecker, *Dryocopus lineatus*.

[<http://fincasquindioya.com/especies-aves-quindio/>, downloaded 17 September 2016]

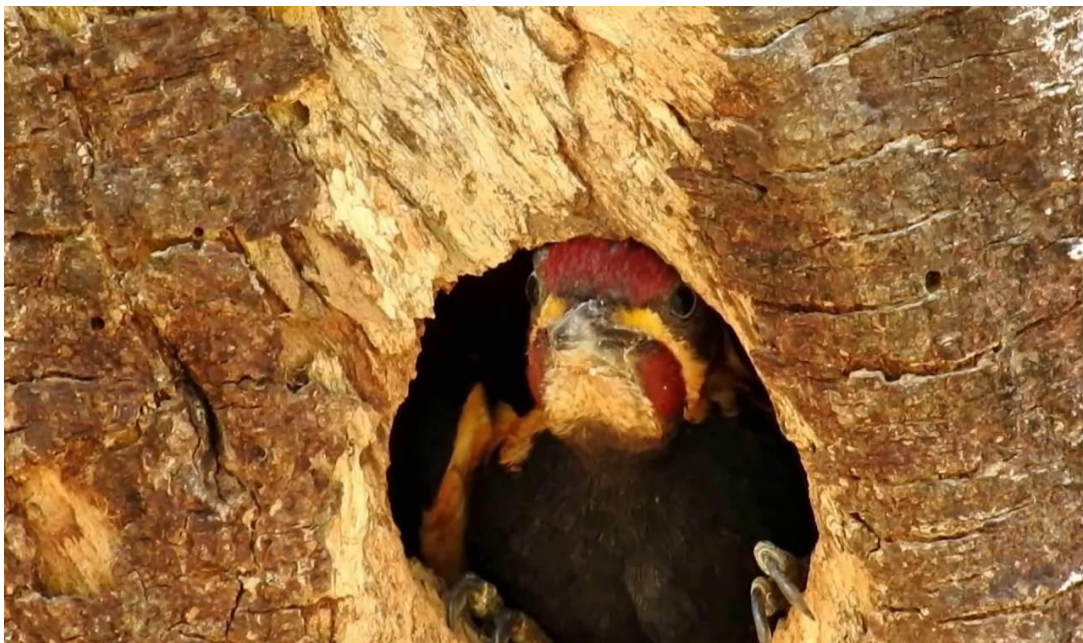


Fig. 3. Male lineated woodpecker, *Dryocopus lineatus*, in a nest cavity.

[<https://i.ytimg.com/vi/ovxhsqfisow/maxresdefault.jpg>, downloaded 17 September 2016]

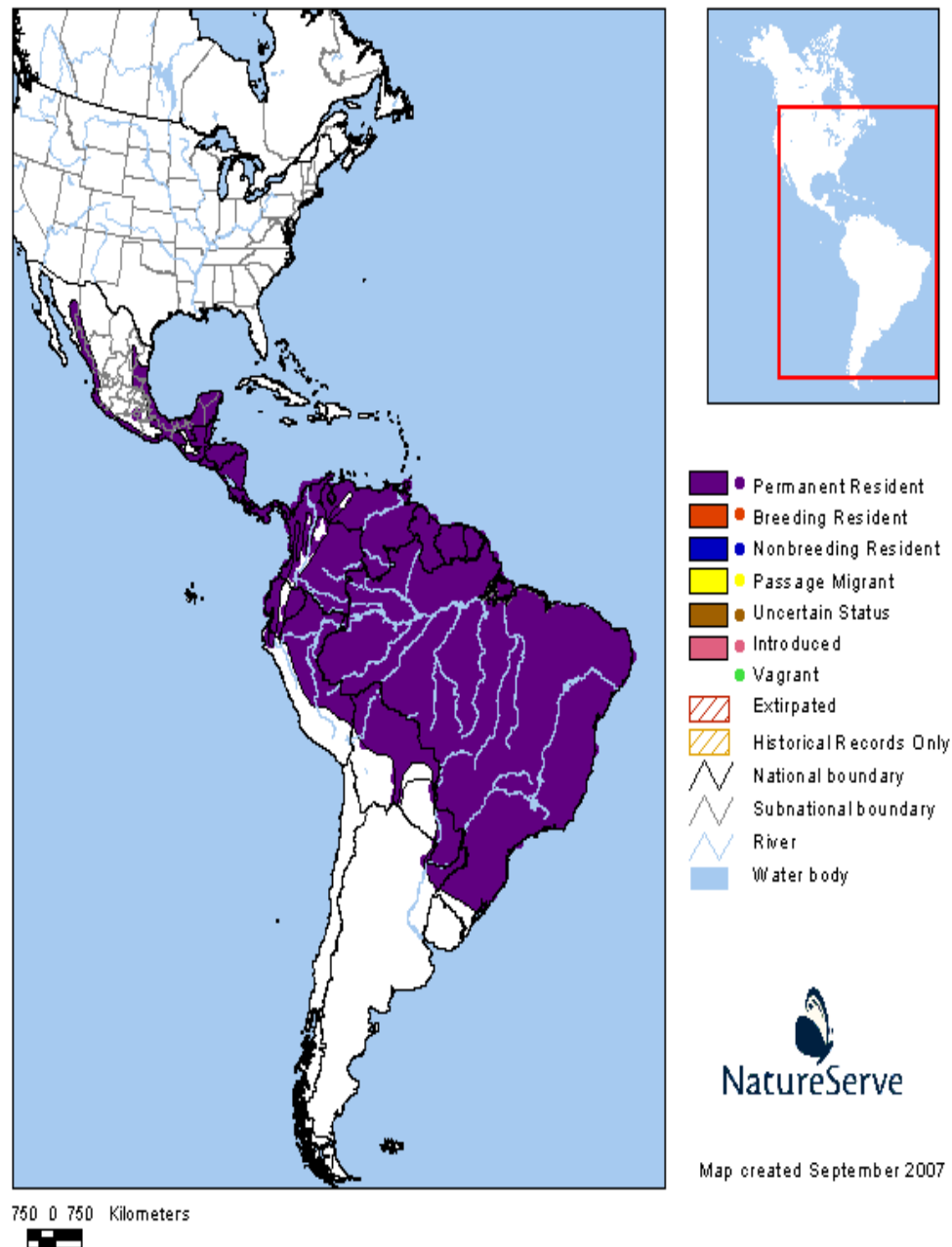


Fig. 4. Distribution map for lineated woodpecker, *Dryocopus lineatus*.

[http://www.birdphotos.com/infonaturamaps/dryocopus_lineatus.gif, downloaded 17 September 2016]