

Myiodynastes maculatus (Streaked Flycatcher)

Family: Tyrannidae (Tyrant flycatchers)

Order: Passeriformes (Perching birds)

Class: Aves (Birds)



Fig. 1. Streaked flycatcher, *Myiodynastes maculatus*.

<http://tomandcarolsykes.blogspot.com/2016/01/first-of-two-tours-costa-rica.html>

TRAITS. The streaked flycatcher is 22 cm in length and both sexes are roughly the same size and weight when they are adults. This species has a brown head, with a pale yellow patch at the top of the head. There are black streaks that run across its face from the back of the beak to the back of its head, covering the eyes on either side. The underside is yellowish white in colour, and it has black feet. The back is brown, with dark brown streaks whilst the wings are dark brown in colour with each feather having pale yellow streaks on the edges giving it its streaked appearance. There is light brown colouring on the bottom side of the wings, and the rump and tail are chestnut brown in colour (French, 1973). This bird has a fairly large bill that is black in colour, with a pink lining on the underside of the beak.

ECOLOGY. The streaked flycatcher is a widespread neotropical bird that normally inhabits regions such as Mexico to as far South as Argentina, and North-East to the Atlantic coast of South America – including countries such as: Venezuela, Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago. This species

breeds in the South regions of South America and migrates North to Venezuela and the Guianas between March to September (ffrench, 2012). They are only ever found in tropical or subtropical regions, usually in areas with white mangroves, alongside rivers in forested areas, close to river islands, and near to coffee plantations (Restall, 2006). They have also been seen inhabiting areas at the edge of forests, as well as suburban areas with cultivated lands (ffrench, 2004).

SOCIAL ORGANIZATION. The streaked flycatcher is primarily solitary, however, it forms mating pairs during breeding season, and while raising their young (Shah, 2012). Male and female streaked flycatchers work together to build a nest, copulate, hatch their offspring but take turns feeding them until they leave the nest (Gross 1950). Both male and female normally separate once more, after their hatchlings leave the nest. The flycatcher normally co-exists peacefully with other species of birds, but they show aggression towards other species when protecting their nests. They occasionally join mixed flocks of birds when they are feeding, as they are able to find food faster and easier in great numbers (Machado, 1999).

ACTIVITY. This species is diurnal and is active from dawn, until just before dusk. The streaked flycatcher is a very noisy bird that sings complex songs throughout the day. It usually flies high up in the canopy of trees to perch on branches and is hardly ever on the forest floor.

FORAGING BEHAVIOUR. It feeds on berries, lizards and insects including cicadas, locusts, and beetles (ffrench, 2012). When feeding, the bird leaves its perching position high in the trees, to swoop down making short sallies while seeking its prey (ffrench, 1973). When hunting insects and lizards, smaller individuals are preferred by the streaked flycatcher (Gross, 1950). They are able to consume small lizards by firstly grabbing the reptile in its bill, and then going to perch on a nearby tree to start to devour its food. The bird then strikes the lizard on its head and rear, against the branch. The lizard becomes stunned, and the bird then delivers a few final fatal blows with its bill. The streaked flycatcher then swallows its prey slowly, while shaking its head to get the lizard down its throat (Gross, 1950).

COMMUNICATION. This bird is often very noisy using loud daytime calls such as: “kip!” “chup!” and “eechup!” in Colombia, “dit!” in Venezuela and Ecuador and “chip chip chip” 1 per second, in Trinidad. These calls are used during every day activity, for example, while resting on branches. Calls such as: churrs, twitters, clucks and near-trills are used to attract mates during breeding season (Shah, 2012). In addition, they also have a dawn and dusk song: *WEET* in Venezuela, “*wheé-cheederee-wheé*” in Ecuador and “*scree-per-cher-wee*” in Trinidad (Restall 2006). They also utter faint gurgling notes while feeding their young (Gross 1950). These complex songs are learnt from each other and are unique to each country, due to geographic isolation (Catchpole and Slater, 1995).

SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR. Male and female streaked flycatchers usually pick a spot to build a nest in a tree hollow or up in the canopy for the female to lay her eggs. Females gather most of the material for the nest, whereas the male only gathers a little. During that time, the female flies back and forth with fibres for the nest, while the male perches on a nearby tree, watching for predators (Gross 1950). There is no significant courtship behaviour seen between males and females, except for mate calls. After copulation, two to three eggs are laid in one to two day intervals (ffrench 2012). The eggs are pale olive in colour with reddish brown blotches. The female spends 66% of daylight hours incubating her eggs until they hatch (ffrench 2012). After the eggs

hatch, both male and female take turns in feeding their young. They continue to guard their young in different positions; the female in the nest and the male perched on a nearby tree (Gross 1950).

JUVENILE BEHAVIOUR. Hatchlings normally become very loud as they grow older. They remain in the nest until they are old enough to fly and leave usually after 18-21 days (Gross 1950). Both parents take turns in feeding the hatchlings via regurgitation of food. They are fully dependent on their parents until they leave the nest. They use very faint shrieks and calls to get their parent's attention. When the mother is in the nest with them, they tend to go close to her or up under her for comfort.

ANTIPREDATOR BEHAVIOUR. The male flycatcher perches on a nearby tree close to the female and the nest, to guard the nest and chase away predators. For example, a predator such as the white hawk, usually flies low to the ground and might circle the nest until it sees an opportunity to attack the nest. The female streaked flycatcher stays in the nest to guard the hatchlings. Whereas, the male leaves its perching position and dashes straight at the hawk to try and confuse it at first. If the hawk is still present, the male flycatcher starts to mob the hawk until it leaves, by shrieking loudly at the hawk for a long period of time. Once the hawk retreats, the male streaked flycatcher returns to its original position in the nearby tree (Gross 1950).

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Fig. 2. Streaked flycatcher geographic distribution.

<https://neotropical.birds.cornell.edu/Species-Account/nb/species/strfly1/distribution>



Fig. 3. Streaked flycatcher eggs in nest.

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/barloventomagico/5681769247/in/set-72157626728692777>

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