

Pipra erythrocephala (Golden-headed Manakin)

Family: Pipridae (Manakins)

Order: Passeriformes (Perching Birds)

Class: Aves (Birds)



Fig. 1. Male golden-headed manakin, *Pipra erythrocephala*.

[<http://www.flickr.com/photos/ucumari/388365459/in/photostream>, downloaded November 3, 2011]

TRAITS. It is a small passerine bird whose length can range between 8 to 10 cm and weighs between 12 to 14g (Bouglouan, 2009). The males of the species have a yellow-orange head which includes the crown, cheek and upper nape. There is a slight red border at the base of the head as seen in figure 1. The rest of their body is covered in black plumage. Their beaks are slight yellow and their feet are pink-brown. The iris of the eye is white. The females and the juvenile males are olive green in colour with grey irises as seen in figures 2 and 3.

ECOLOGY. The golden-headed manakin can be found in moist forest habitats and open second growth woodlands (The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species, 2011). Their altitudinal range is 0 to 2000 metres. Their geographic range is Central and South America and Trinidad and Tobago (The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species, 2011).

SOCIAL ORGANIZATION. There is a highly complex social organisation amongst the males of the species. They gather in groups of up to 12 birds to put on displays in a communal lek (Lynx, 2011). A lek is an area where they display courtship behaviour. They also bathe communally in forest streams. They take turns to bathe while the others perch a few metres away to observe for predators. The male golden-headed manakins usually roost on slender branches in the lower levels of the forest (Lynx, 2011). During the breeding season, they roost outside the leks and generally near the main feeding areas (Lill, 1976). The females roost in different areas to the males. They are either alone or with a dependent juvenile on the same branch.

ACTIVITY. They are most active during the daylight hours. Courting occurs for 8 months, during which the males spend 90% of the daylight hours displaying courtship behaviour (Gunton, 1990). The communal bathing takes place between 16:00 and 17:30 hours (Lynx, 2011).

FORAGING BEHAVIOUR. Juveniles of the species feed mostly on insects while the adults feed on fruits. In Trinidad, studies conducted have shown that the adults feed on 43 plant species (Lynx, 2011). The fruits, spiders and insects are usually plucked during rapid flight after which the manakin lands on a nearby perch and swallows it whole. If accessible, the manakin will also feed on fruits and spiders while perching. The fruits on which the manakins feed have high water content but low nutrient concentration. They process the food rapidly via their intestines in order to get rid of seeds (Lynx, 2011).

SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR. The breeding season for golden-headed manakins is from January to August. The peak breeding period is from March to July (Lill, 1976). When courting, up to 12 males display in a lek. The display occurs on horizontal branches which are 6 to 12 metres above the ground. These branches are called the mating perch and may be 2-3 metres apart and in the same tree or 10 metres or more apart and in adjacent trees. The courtship behaviour is displayed for 90% of the daylight hours but becomes more active courtship display is stimulated when one or more females visit the lek. This display is most frequent in the hour after sunrise and in mid-afternoon (Lynx, 2011). There are five types of courtship display done by the male golden-headed manakin (Lynx, 2011 and Bouglouan, 2009).

Type 1: the bird rapidly flies between the main perch and an adjacent perch 1-1.5 metres away with its legs fully stretched and the body held horizontally. The wings produce a brisk humming sound while flying. He turns and reverses direction before landing. Type 2: the bird rapidly makes about-face turns while flicking its wings upward and remaining in place. There are foot movements made but they cannot be seen clearly. Type 3: the bird appears to slide backwards. To do this the bird stretches its legs, holds its head low and raised its tail. It then moves backwards with very short steps for 10-20 cm, and the tail is depressed and fanned while the wings are raised and held vertically above the back. Type 4: the head and body are held stiffly in an upright position for several seconds while clinging to the side of the perch with a slightly open bill. Type 5: the male flies from his perch to a higher perch 15 to 25 metres away where it lands and faces its main perch. It then makes two or three sharp monosyllable calls after which it rapidly flies back to its main perch while uttering the same calls which become quicker and sharper as he nears the main perch. Upon approach to the main perch, the bird rapidly

swoops downward then upward and as it alights on the perch, it utters a sharp buzzing call. When it lands, it slides backwards.

Sometimes, the female may mutually display a less intense form of courtship behaviour. Often after several visits to the lek, the female copulates one or more times with one of the male residents on its mating perch after his display of flight.

REPRODUCTION. Only the female participates in the nest duties (Lynx, 2011). She builds a nest shaped like a small cup out of woven plant fibres and debris. The inside is lined with some dead leaves. The nest is attached to the fork of horizontal twigs with spider webs. The nest may be located in a young tree or shrubs in branches which are located 5-10 m above the ground. In the nest, two brown-mottled yellowish eggs (Wikipedia, 2011) are laid which are then incubated for 16 to 17 days.

ANTIPREDATOR BEHAVIOUR. One example of antipredator behaviour is the communal bathing and the gathering of more than one male in the lek. Because of this organisation, individuals can easily be alerted to the threat of a predator in the area. Also, there are more individuals to drive the predator away. The absence of the male from the nesting area of the juveniles is another type of antipredator behaviour. The males are brightly coloured and would attract predators to the nest. Also, two eggs are laid by the female so that they are easier to protect.

REFERENCES

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- Lill, A. 1976. "*Lek behavior in the golden-headed manakin, Pipra erythrocephala in Trinidad (West Indies)*". Fortschritte der Verhaltensforschung, Vol 18, 1976, 83.
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Fig. 2. The female golden-headed manakin.

[<http://www.jonkhill.com/caribbean/trinidadbirds/trinidadbirds.htm>, downloaded November 3, 2011]

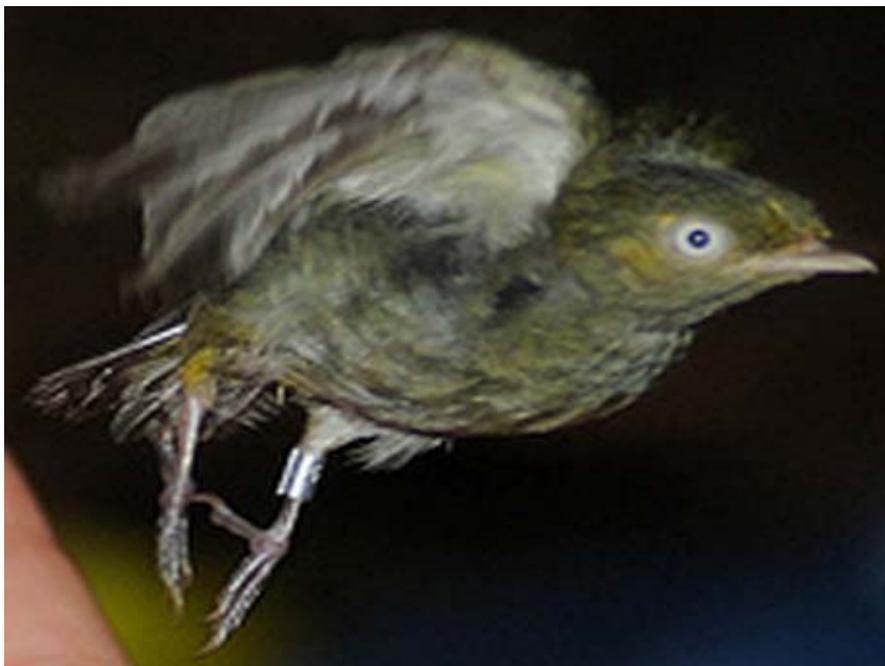


Fig. 3. The juvenile male golden-headed manakin.

[<http://www.jonkhill.com/caribbean/trinidadbirds/trinidadbirds.htm>, downloaded November 3, 2011]