

Polytmus guainumbi (White-tailed Goldentthroat)

Family: Trochilidae (Hummingbirds)

Order: Trochiliformes (Hummingbirds)

Class: Aves (Birds)



Fig. 1. White-tailed goldentthroat, *Polytmus guainumbi*.

[http://neotropical.birds.cornell.edu/portal/species/overview?p_p_spp=250491, downloaded 3 March 2017]

TRAITS. *Polytmus guainumbi* is characterised by a large white-tipped tail and two white streaks which border the patch of greyish-black feathers around the eye (Fig. 1). It is approximately 10cm long, with a wing length of 56mm (ffrench, 1991). In males, the white lines at the back of the eye (postocular) and at the side of the face (malar), are longer and have a smooth appearance. The bill is long and curved downwards with a red colour on the lower side and a mixture of red and black on the upper part, with the entire tip coloured black (Restall et al., 2007). The bill is approximately 25mm in length (ffrench, 1991). In males, the top of the head is coloured coppery brown and the upperparts are covered in bronze-green feathers. The underparts are coloured a shimmering golden-green. The tail is long, broad and rounded with the three large tail feathers (rectrices) displaying white edges. The underside of the tail appears almost completely white when closed (Restall et al., 2007). The female is similar but the throat and breast is more white and spotted green (Hilty, 2003). Juveniles are similar to adult females (Restall et al., 2007).

DISTRIBUTION. This species is native to Trinidad and Tobago as well as most South American countries which include Venezuela, Bolivia, Colombia, Suriname, Guyana, Brazil, Paraguay, French Guiana, Peru, and Argentina. (IUCN, 2016) (Fig. 2). Seasonal migration of *Polytmus guainumbi* may occur after the reproductive season (ffrench, 1991).

HABITAT AND ACTIVITY. The species is found mostly in open savannas, pastures and waterlogged grasslands. It prefers areas that are located near water. Commonly seen around the Orinoco in Venezuela (De Schauensee and Phelps, 1978). *Polytmus guainumbi* flies and forages close to the ground at low levels and typically by themselves (Sedgwick, 2011). Mostly active during the day (diurnal).

FOOD AND FEEDING. Feeds frequently on the nectar of flowers such as *Heliconia* and shrubs that are hidden, low to the ground and scattered in patches. It may occasionally feed on some types of flowering trees, e.g., *Lagerstroemia*. A sharp “tsip-tsip” noise is heard while it is foraging and it hovers over the plants instead of resting on it (Hilty, 2003). It also commonly feeds on insects and spiders found in vegetation.

POPULATION ECOLOGY. *Polytmus guainumbi* is solitary. It is uncommon in Trinidad and French Guiana (Ffrench, 1991). Increased movement occurs around the breeding season when migrating to new areas. According to the IUCN the population size of the species is unknown however, it is considered to be common (IUCN, 2016).

REPRODUCTION. Breeding seasons vary in different countries, some of which include: June-August in Trinidad, October to November in Venezuela, and October in Brazil and Argentina. Breeding usually occurs in the wet season in Trinidad. Nests are cone-shaped and are built close to the ground (Fig. 3), often over water, in bushes or shrubs and they are usually exposed (Hilty, 2003). Nests are sometimes located in areas close to each other. White-tailed goldthroats usually have a clutch size of three, with eggs being approximately 13.1 mm long and 8.7mm in width (Ffrench, 1991). They have an incubation period of 14-15 days and when hatched, the young stay with the adult female for 20-30 days before leaving the nest.

BEHAVIOUR. While foraging and flying they make “tsip-tsip” noises and while perched, a high pitched squeaking sound can be heard (Ffrench, 1991). They are also known to make a series of loud, rapid “Spit!” noises (Hilty, 2003). They generally fly at low levels and forage by themselves. *Polytmus guainumbi* are mostly sedentary which allows them to conserve energy however, after their reproductive season they may be more active when migrating to different areas. They have few predators but have been recorded being preyed on by pygmy owls.

APPLIED ECOLOGY. The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species categorises *Polytmus guainumbi* as of Least Concern (LC). The evaluation is justified by the species being present over a large area or range and has no record of significant population decline, therefore it does not qualify for the categories of threatened or vulnerable (IUCN, 2016). However, in Trinidad and Tobago *Polytmus guainumbi* is listed as a protected species that is restricted from hunting (EMA, 2005).

REFERENCES

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Fig. 2. White-tailed goldenthrroat geographic distribution.

[http://neotropical.birds.cornell.edu/portal/species/overview?p_p_spp=250491, downloaded 3 March 2017]



Fig. 3. *Polytmus guainumbi* nest with two nestlings.

[<http://www.hbw.com/ibc/photo/white-tailed-golden-throat-polytmus-guainumbi/nest-two-nestlings>,
downloaded 4 March 2017]

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