

Ramphocelus carbo (Silver-beaked Tanager)

Family: Thraupidae (Tanagers and Honeycreepers)

Order: Passeriformes (Perching Birds)

Class: Aves (Birds)



Fig. 1. Silver-beaked tanager, *Ramphocelus carbo*.

[<https://www.wildliferescuett.org/wildlife-guide/>, downloaded 5 March 2017]

TRAITS. This tanager is an average-sized passerine bird that is 18cm in length and can weigh up to 25g (Wikipedia, 2017). The adult males are black in shaded areas but have a rich maroon tone with a deep crimson on their throat and chest when observed in sunlight (Fig. 1). In the males, the upper beak is black and the enlarged lower beak is silver in colour. The females are duller than the males with a brown upper body and a reddish brown lower body. The females do not have the silver beak but instead have a black beak (Uhrik, 2017a).

DISTRIBUTION. Commonly found in Guyana, Paraguay, Peru, Bolivia, Central Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, French Guiana Suriname, Trinidad and Venezuela (IUCN, 2016). The total distribution range for the silver beaked tanager is 11,500,000 km². The geographic distribution of this species is shown in Fig. 2.

HABITAT AND ACTIVITY. Males in the breeding period display territoriality by using a dawn song that signifies breeding territory up to a 10m radius (Uhrik, 2017b). The tanagers can be found along roadsides in a thick low canopy of trees and shrubs and gardens near water. The nests are built by the females that take care of the eggs and young within a 20-25 day period. The males when mating have a territorial defence but otherwise, these birds do not mark any territory (Planet of Birds, 2017). Their daily activities involve foraging, singing, taking care of their young or occasionally attracting a female for mating. These birds do not migrate but they do stay within their boundary (Woodcock, 2011).

FOOD AND FEEDING. The tanagers are omnivores and they forage for insects, fruits (Fig. 3), vines and flowers (nectar). The tanager forages nervously, flicking its tail and wings. When the tanager feeds on fruits, they peck out huge pieces and crush it to appropriate sizes for consumption. By hopping and peering through foliage the tanagers find insects and once they see any they rapidly dart forward and capture their prey (Uhrik 2017b). This species can be found feeding on short grass along roadsides, weeds and farming areas. The type of trees they feed on are second-growth trees and shrubs (Avibirds, 2017). Since these birds feed in tropical areas, vegetation and insects are in abundance and food is not scarce. The tanagers being omnivores are not limited to food resources.

POPULATION ECOLOGY. The species is found in groups of 6-10. When there are 30 or more tanagers in one area, the birds compete for food resources. The birds do not show territorial defence to other species. When these birds fly in flocks they follow the leader and usually make loud noises (Uhrik, 2017b). The relative abundance of the tanagers is considered “common” when compared to other bird species. The tanagers occupy a large range and are not considered to be vulnerable to danger. Despite the population size of the silver-beaked tanager being unknown, the population trend is stable (IUCN, 2016).

REPRODUCTION. When the male silver-beaked tanager is in the process of attracting a female, it points its beak upwards to display its silver lower mandible. The female tanager builds a deep cup-shaped nest 1-2.5m from the ground. The nest is composed of dead leaves inside and living plant matter outside. The nests are commonly located in a dense bushy area. Eggs are laid by the female tanagers for several days. The eggs are blue-green in colour with blackish-brown or grey markings (Uhrik, 2017b). The eggs are incubated for up to 12 days before they hatch. After birth the chicks fledge for another 12 days until they are ready for flight (Avibirds, 2017).

BEHAVIOUR. These birds flick their wings and tails before flight. The tanager has an abrupt take off and flies in a rhythmic pattern from tree to tree. When a predator is nearby, the tanager has either an upright or crouching posture while it stares at its opponent quietly. In the process of looking for food, the tanagers search from the ground up to 25m (Uhrik, 2017b). This species has claws that grasp onto tree branches. They hang upside down occasionally to feed on nearby fruits. They also have a communicating call named “cheeng” (Wikipedia, 2017).

APPLIED ECOLOGY. This species is ranked as Least Concern (LC) by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). This species population was evaluated and thus not considered threatened, near threatened or conservation dependent (IUCN, 2016).

REFERENCES

- Avibirds. (2017). Silver-beaked Tanager (*Ramphocelus carbo*). South American birds online guide. http://avibirds.com/sahtml/Silver-beaked_Tanager.html
- IUCN. (2016). Silver-beaked Tanager (*Ramphocelus carbo*). <http://www.iucnredlist.org/details/22722507/0>
- Planet of Birds. (2017). *Ramphocelus carbo*. <http://www.planetofbirds.com/passeriformes-thraupidae-silver-beaked-tanager-ramphocelus-carbo>
- Uhrik, K. (2017a). Silver-beaked Tanager (*Ramphocelus carbo*) – overview. Neotropical Birds. http://neotropical.birds.cornell.edu/portal/species/overview?p_p_spp=598316
- Uhrik, K. (2017b). Silver-beaked Tanager (*Ramphocelus carbo*) – life history. Neotropical Birds. http://neotropical.birds.cornell.edu/portal/species/lifehistory?p_p_spp=598316/
- Wikipedia. (2017). *Ramphocelus carbo* - Silver-beaked Tanager. <http://eol.org/pages/1052871/overview>
- Woodcock, J. (2011). The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Birds. Dorling Kindersley Ltd.

Author: Avita Osuna

Posted online: 2017



Fig. 2. Silver-beaked tanager geographic distribution.

[<http://www.planetofbirds.com/passeriformes-thraupidae-silver-beaked-tanager-ramphocelus-carbo>, downloaded 5 March 2017]



Fig. 3. Silver-beaked tanager feeding on mango.

[<http://www.ttnaturelink.com/category/quick-guides>, downloaded 5 March 2017]

For educational use only - copyright of images remains with original source