

Tityra cayana (Black-tailed Tityra)

Family: Cotingidae (Bellbirds and Cotingas)

Order: Passeriformes (Perching Birds)

Class: Aves (Birds)



Fig. 1. Black-tailed tityra, *Tityra cayana*.

[http://neotropical.birds.cornell.edu/portal/image/image_gallery?uuid=6da8b314-7e80-446b-ba6c-68172ca3c2f5&groupId=11003, downloaded 19 February 2017]

TRAITS. *Tityra cayana* is a robust bird of medium size, with a long hook-tipped bill and a short tail that has the tityra characteristic of a peculiar vestigial ninth primary feather. Total length of adult is 20-22cm and weight 60-70g for both sexes. Males are dull white above and white below. The tail, edges of wings and cap (which extends below the eyes) are black (Fig. 1). Females possess dark brown feathers on wings compared to the usual black seen on males, dark brown tail, and brown pattern on head, back and underside. Both sexes have the characteristic patch of rosy-red bare skin around the eye that extends to the red base of the bill; the tip of the bill is black, and they have dark irises and feet (Wikipedia, 2016).

DISTRIBUTION. This species is native to much of South America (Fig. 2), including Brazil, Guyana, Colombia, Suriname, French Guiana, Paraguay, Venezuela, Bolivia, Ecuador, and Trinidad and Tobago. This species is not known to migrate (IUCN, 2017).

HABITAT AND ACTIVITY. The black-tailed tityra is commonly located in a variety of humid habitats, mostly near forest borders, tall open canopy layers, second growth along riversides and

clearings with dispersed trees. It can be observed up to 1000m above sea level (Wikipedia, 2016). The species is diurnal, most sightings of activity occur during daytime (Beauty of Birds, 2017).

FOOD AND FEEDING. Large insects are gathered and fed to the chicks, whereas medium-sized fruits are incorporated into the diet of adults. The insects are often found near the nest, and fruits may be from the same tree or surrounding trees. Fruits are eaten while perched while insects are caught through either perch-gleaning or hover-gleaning (Neotropical Birds, 2010).

POPULATION ECOLOGY. This species is commonly sighted in pairs, rarely singly or in small groups. It is very aggressive and assumed to be territorial and they do not join feeding flocks with different species. It is unclear whether they produce their own cavities in the trees as they are also known to reside in old woodpecker holes (Planet of Birds, 2017).

REPRODUCTION. The breeding season for this species is from November to March. Nesting birds however have been encountered almost year round across its large range. Breeding occurs within cavities high up in tall trees. These cavities are modified and filled with leaves and small twigs in order to prepare for nesting. The eggs are brown, and the adult female incubates them for 3-4 weeks until the chicks hatch. Two broods of 2-4 eggs may be raised per season. Both parents are known to forage for insects high above the canopy layer in order to provide for the young (Planet of Birds, 2017).

BEHAVIOUR. The chicks are altricial which refers to the inability to move around on its own after hatching. They are blind and featherless. The juveniles are extremely vulnerable and require parental care for several weeks while they develop. The voice is described as being soft and nasal, with double-noted croaking. It is unclear whether its voice is used to scare off other species or is strictly used to communicate between members of its own species (Hilty, 1986).

APPLIED ECOLOGY. This species is considered to be of Least Concern by the IUCN. It is common throughout its extremely large range, which includes national parks and other protected areas (IUCN, 2017).

REFERENCES

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Fig. 2. The geographic distribution of the black-tailed tityra (*Tityra cayana*).

[neotropical.birds.cornell.edu/map/?cn=Black-tailed%20Tityra&sn=bltit1&species=489036, downloaded 21 February 2017]

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