

## *Arundinicola leucocephala* (White-headed Marsh Tyrant)

Family: Tyrannidae (Tyrant Flycatchers)

Order: Passeriformes (Perching Birds)

Class: Aves (Birds)



**Fig. 1.** White-headed marsh tyrant, *Arundinicola leucocephala*.

[<http://greglasley.com/content/BirdsofSouthAmerica/White-headedMarsh-Tyrant.php>, downloaded 25 February 2017]

**TRAITS.** *Arundinicola leucocephala* is a small passerine of the tyrant flycatcher family (Wikipedia, 2016). Males typically have an all-white head with a slightly bushy crest that gives the head a rounded look (Restall, 2007). The rest of the body is black, including the top half of the bill with the basal half of the mandible yellow (Fig. 1). Males are usually 13cm in length and weigh 13g. The females' wings and tail feathers are brownish grey, while their face, throat and underparts are white with a brownish-grey hue to breast, sides and flanks (Fig. 2). Juveniles and females look the same. Females are also 13cm in length and weigh 12-12.5g (Ffrench, 2012).

**DISTRIBUTION.** White-headed marsh tyrants can be found ranging from Colombia and Venezuela to Bolivia, Argentina and Paraguay (Fig. 3). They are commonly found in mangroves or marsh areas of Trinidad, typically Caroni, Nariva and South Oropouche (Ramcharan and Ffrench, 1988).

**HABITAT AND ACTIVITY.** White-headed marsh tyrants are found mainly on wetlands in tropical zones. They usually occupy marshes, shrubby, damp grasslands and open riverine habitats

(Restall, 2007). Breeding periods are recorded from January to April and July to October. Males tend to stay greater distances from the nest and therefore display little effort in regard to feeding the nestlings (Cestari, 2012). Cleaning of nests is done by all parties, although females removed faecal sacs far from the nest more frequently than the males did, nestlings would also help in cleaning by passing arthropod remains to the beak of the adults and it is this nest sanitation mechanism that is proposedly responsible for reducing infestation by parasites or pathogens (Cestari, 2012).

**FOOD AND FEEDING.** *Arundinicola* perches low, near ground or water or on exposed stems to capture their prey in a hawk-like manner (Restall, 2007). Their diet includes flying insects such as dragonflies, grasshoppers, froghoppers and beetles (Fig. 4). Feeding of juveniles is by both male and females where food is carried back to the nest in their beaks.

**REPRODUCTION.** The nest is a ball of both grass and feathers with a side opening near the top, called a porch (Fig. 5). It is built by both sexes near or above water and normally carries creamy white eggs. The clutch size can vary between two to four eggs (Skutch, 1985). The incubation and nestling feeding activities are carried out by both male and female parent (Cestari, 2012).

**BEHAVIOUR.** White-headed marsh tyrants can be seen either singly or in pairs. They are rarely found on the ground but can be found perching on a low branch or fence (French, 2012). They are mostly silent but occasionally give off a high pitched single call. Juveniles remain in their nests until 15-17 days after which they leave (Ffrench, 2012).

**APPLIED ECOLOGY.** This species is currently listed as of Least Concern by the IUCN as it does not appear to be threatened in any way. The population trend appears to be stable, and hence the species does not approach the thresholds for vulnerability under the population trend criterion (IUCN, 2017). Threats may come from the parasitic cowbird *Molothrus* or declining habitat.

## REFERENCES

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Author: Nikita Ewing

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**Fig. 2.** Female white-headed marsh tyrant.

[[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/White-headed\\_marsh\\_tyrant#/media/File:Arundinicola\\_leucocephala\\_-\\_Piraju,\\_Sao\\_Paulo,\\_Brasil\\_-female-8.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/White-headed_marsh_tyrant#/media/File:Arundinicola_leucocephala_-_Piraju,_Sao_Paulo,_Brasil_-female-8.jpg), downloaded 7 March 2017]



**Fig. 3.** White-headed marsh tyrant distribution.

[<http://maps.iucnredlist.org/map.html?id=22700291>, downloaded 4 March 2017]



**Fig. 4.** Female white-headed marsh tyrant with its prey.

[<http://www.oiseaux-birds.com/card-white-headed-marsh-tyrant.html>, downloaded 7 March 2017]



**Fig. 5.** Female white-headed marsh tyrant with its nest.

[[http://www.hbw.com/sites/default/files/styles/ibc\\_2k/public/ibc/p/Foto\\_96\\_White\\_headed\\_Marsh\\_Tyrant\\_-\\_L.\\_E.\\_Uruena.JPG?itok=oThmdcUD](http://www.hbw.com/sites/default/files/styles/ibc_2k/public/ibc/p/Foto_96_White_headed_Marsh_Tyrant_-_L._E._Uruena.JPG?itok=oThmdcUD), downloaded 7 March 2017]