

Nesting record of Swallow-tailed Cotinga *Phibalura flavirostris* in the Atlantic Forest of Santa Catarina, southern Brazil

João Paulo Gava Just and Vanessa Claudino Bitencourt

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A tesourinha-da-mata *Phibalura flavirostris* é uma ave Neotropical de aparência marcante, com duas subespécies reconhecidas. No entanto, a biologia reprodutiva da subespécie nominal, que ocorre na Mata Atlântica, ainda é pouco conhecida. Este estudo registra um evento de reprodução de *P. f. flavirostris* em Santa Catarina, sul do Brasil. O ninho, uma pequena taça feita de líquens (*Usnea* sp.), foi construído na forquilha de uma árvore, a 7 m de altura, dentro de um pomar em uma reserva ambiental particular em Nova Veneza. O monitoramento ocorreu entre 14–22 de novembro de 2024, período em que ambos os adultos participaram da incubação. O ninho foi abandonado sem ovos após 8 dias, possivelmente devido à predação ou a condições climáticas adversas. Esses resultados ressaltam a necessidade de mais estudos para identificar os fatores que influenciam o sucesso reprodutivo de *P. f. flavirostris* e para subsidiar esforços de conservação dessa subespécie.

Cotingas are a remarkable group of Neotropical birds that have garnered increasing attention in recent decades¹². Studies of their breeding behaviour have significantly contributed to understanding avian reproductive systems in the region^{6,12,19}. Among them, the Swallow-tailed Cotinga *Phibalura flavirostris* stands out for its striking plumage and distinctive forked tail. Traditionally, two allopatric populations are recognised as subspecies, even though some authors suggest they are separate species^{12,13}. Here, we follow the subspecies treatment. The nominate subspecies *P. f. flavirostris* primarily inhabits the Atlantic Forest region in forest, forest borders, and even gardens and meadows with isolated trees, occurring from northeastern to southern Brazil, in eastern Paraguay and in northeastern Argentina¹³, whereas *P. f. boliviana* is restricted to the yungas forests, semi-humid open woodlands and highland savannas in the foothills of dpto. La Paz, western Bolivia^{1,7,13}. The Bolivian subspecies has been relatively well-studied in terms of its breeding biology, with detailed accounts available^{1–4,7}.

The nominate subspecies is relatively uncommon to rare at most sites where it occurs, and our understanding of its breeding ecology and seasonal movements remains limited, leaving significant gaps¹³. However, the few published studies and scattered unpublished citizen-science records from Brazil suggest a consistent pattern that warrants further investigation: nests are cup-shaped and mostly constructed of lichens, attached to tree branches at the edges of forested areas, and typically built during the spring and summer¹³. Additionally, while the species may tolerate disturbed habitats for breeding in some areas, it remains closely associated with forested

matrices. Regarding incubation and parental care, both sexes are known to participate, but no quantitative assessments have been made of their respective contributions¹³. The scarcity of robust data across distinct environments in its range might hinder broader ecological interpretations, which are important for informing threat status assessments and conservation practices.

In this paper we document a novel breeding record of *P. f. flavirostris* in the Atlantic Forest of Santa Catarina state, southern Brazil—an area with few documented nesting events for this species^{12,13,19}. This study provides observations on key breeding aspects of this subspecies, particularly nest architecture, placement and incubation behavior.

Observations

Field observations were conducted at Área Particular de Proteção Ambiental Reserva São Francisco, in the municipality of Nova Veneza, Santa Catarina, Brazil. This privately protected area spans c.1,500 ha in the foothills of the Serra Geral mountain range, at 200–1,100 m elevation. The vegetation is predominantly composed of secondary remnants of submontane and montane dense ombrophilous forests in intermediate to advanced stages of regeneration²¹. The understorey is dense and highly diverse, featuring a rich assemblage of epiphytes, terrestrial herbs, mosses and lichens, while the canopy reaches heights of up to 20 m (pers. obs.). The regional climate is subtropical, consistently humid, with no distinct dry season. Mean annual temperatures range from 17.0–19.3°C, while annual precipitation (1,220–1,660 mm) is distributed throughout the year, without clear wet and dry seasons⁸.



Figure 1. Overall view of the nesting area of Swallow-tailed Cotinga *Phibalura flavirostris* at Reserva São Francisco, Nova Veneza, Santa Catarina, Brazil, November 2024 (Vanessa Claudino Bitencourt). The white arrow indicates the exact position of the nest in the pecan tree *Carya illinoensis*. Note the short distance to the reserve building.



Figure 2. Pair of Swallow-tailed Cotinga *Phibalura flavirostris* (**A–B** female, sexed by olive wings and paler grey head; **C–D** male, sexed by black wings and head) incubating on nest, Reserva São Francisco, Nova Veneza, Santa Catarina, Brazil, 17 November 2024 (Sidney José Damiani). On this day, the heat index reached 36°C, causing the birds to keep their bills open at times in order to regulate body temperature.