First record of Todd’s Nightjar *Caprimulgus heterurus* in Guyana

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Todd’s Nightjar *Caprimulgus heterurus* has recently been reinstated as a full species by the AOU’s South American Checklist Committee (Remsen *et al*. 2008). The species was originally described by Todd (1915), but later grouped with its sister taxon, Little Nightjar *Caprimulgus parvulus*, without justification by Peters (1940) and since then its status has been debated (Davis 1978, Hardy 1983, Cleere 1998, Hilty 2003). Vocalisations of the two species distinctly differ (Fig. 1). In addition, *C. heterurus* breeds in the grassland / forest edge across northern Colombia and north-central Venezuela, whilst *C. parvulus* is unknown north of the Amazon River. Nightjars are easier to locate when they vocalise frequently, primarily in the breeding season, but nesting information and status at other times of year in general is lacking.

Here we present a new country record of *C. heterurus* from Guyana on 1 September 2006. This record is significant because it is the first for the expansive Gran Sabana / Roraima-Rupununi savanna region of northern South America. At 20.35 h at the village of Yupukari in the northern Rupununi savanna (03º39’36”N, 59º20’52”W), a single nightjar was seen and sound-recorded by APH using a Sony MZ-NF810 Minidisc and Sennheiser ME66 microphone. The recording is archived at the Macaulay Library of Natural Sounds, Cornell, Ithaca, NY (MLNS 138135). The bird was perched on a bush in savanna bordering dense gallery forest along the Rupununi River. What was presumably the same bird was heard singing at the same location on 2 and 4 September. Each time it sang intermittently for c.1 hour. This range extension demonstrates the need for further research, not only for this species but also for nightjars in general. More data will be necessary to determine if *C. heterurus* breeds in this savanna region of the Guianas or is merely an irregular visitor.

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References:


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