

Tyrannopsis sulphurea (Sulphury Flycatcher)

Family: Tyrannidae (Tyrant Flycatchers)

Order: Passeriformes (Perching Birds)

Class: Aves (Birds)



Fig. 1. Sulphury flycatcher, *Tyrannopsis sulphurea*.

[<http://www.oiseaux-birds.com/page-family-tyrannidae-tyranninae.html>], downloaded 26 February 2017]

TRAITS. *Tyrannopsis sulphurea* is a relatively large tyrant flycatcher (length 19-20.3cm), with a short, broad, black bill. The sexes are similar; the head and neck are dark grey with a concealed yellow crown patch; dark, brownish, wings; brown, fairly short, square tipped tail; throat and upper breast white with dark grey streaks down the sides; upperparts olive brown; underparts bright yellow; black tarsus and toes (Fig. 1). The wing length is 109-111mm in males, 104-105mm in females (Ridgely and Tudor, 2009). The sulphury flycatcher is similar to some species of kingbird but differs by its distinct vocalizations, and is browner and more heavily built, with a shorter bill (ffrench, 2012).

DISTRIBUTION. The distribution of *Tyrannopsis sulphurea* extends east from eastern Columbia to eastern and southern Venezuela, Guyana, Suriname, French Guiana and to Trinidad; south from Columbia to eastern Ecuador, eastern Peru, north western Bolivia and to central Brazil (Meyer de Schauensee, 1971) (Fig. 2).

HABITAT AND ACTIVITY. This species is a resident breeder that lives in warm, tropical lowlands. It is diurnal in activity, and can be found in habitats ranging from swamps to tropical and subtropical savannas, and is usually associated with moriche palms (*Mauritia*). It can be found near large rivers and their forested banks, large clearings and forest edges (Bongers et al., 2013). The sulphury flycatcher is rarely found away from the moriche palms which shows a tendency towards extreme habitat specialization (Kricher, 2015). Parker and Remsen (1987) described the species in Peru as being found in the interior of swampy forests as well as in clearings, and even in isolated palms around houses; but most common in palm groves along the edges of oxbow lakes. In Trinidad, the species inhabit savannas where *Mauritia* grow such as Wallerfield, Bush Bush Forest, and Aripo Savanna (ffrench, 2012).

FOOD AND FEEDING. The sulphury flycatcher waits on an exposed perch in a palm. It forages in the canopy (Bongers et al., 2013) by sallying out from its perch to catch insects in flight and often returns to the same perch (Spaans et al., 2015). It also feeds on fruits and berries (Fig. 3) (ffrench, 2012). Vidoz et al., 2010, observed the species making a series of short flights for fruit of *Cecropia concolor* at the edge of humid forest. Due to their diet, the species can be considered an omnivore and seed disperser (Bongers et al., 2013).

REPRODUCTION. The sulphury flycatcher has a monogamous social system (Bongers et al., 2013) and lives in pairs at the top of the moriche palms (Fig. 4) (Spaans et al., 2015). In Trinidad, breeding has been recorded in April. The nest is built with sticks, in the shape of an open cup, in the leafy crown of a *Mauritia* palm. The typical clutch is two cream-coloured eggs that are heavily blotched with umber brown and clouded with pale violet. The average size of the egg is 25.2 x 19mm. The eggs are usually taken care of by the female (ffrench, 2012).

BEHAVIOUR. The sulphury flycatcher is noisy, and relies on vocalizations to attract mates and defend the territory (Fig. 5). The call is a noisy, squeaky *cheecha-chee-chee* which is often repeated in groups of two or three notes (ffrench, 2012). Hayes (1998) observed an event of interspecific kleptoparasitism in which a boat-billed flycatcher (*Megarynchus pitangua*) caught a butterfly that a sulphury flycatcher then attempted to steal.

APPLIED ECOLOGY. The sulphury flycatcher is listed as Least Concern due to occupying an extremely large range. The population shows a decreasing trend, however, the threshold for vulnerable is not approached (IUCN, 2017).

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Fig. 2. Sulphury flycatcher geographic distribution.

[http://neotropical.birds.cornell.edu/portal/species/overview?p_p_spp=480716, downloaded 6 March 2017]



Fig. 3. Sulphury flycatcher feeding on a fruit.

[<http://www.wikiaves.com/1200406&t=s&s=11334&p=6>, downloaded 6 March 2017]



Fig. 4. Sulphury flycatcher pair on a moriche palm.

[<http://www.wikiaves.com/770530&t=s&s=11334&p=14>, downloaded 6 March 2017]



Fig. 5. Sulphury flycatcher calling.

<http://www.wikiaves.com/2061174&t=s&s=11334&p=15>, downloaded 6 March 2017]

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