

Veniliornis kirkii (Red-rumped Woodpecker)

Family: Picidae (Woodpeckers)

Order: Piciformes (Woodpeckers, Toucans, and Jacamars)

Class: Aves (Birds)



Fig. 1. Red-rumped woodpecker, *Veniliornis kirkii*.

[<http://www.peruaves.org/picidae/red-rumped-woodpecker-veniliornis-kirkii/>, downloaded 9 March 2017]

TRAITS. *Veniliornis kirkii* grows to a typical length of 16cm. The wings grow to 90mm in males and 91mm in females, and they weigh about 36g and 37g, respectively (Ffrench, 2012). They possess a straight, longish bill that is broad across the nostrils. The upperparts of both male and female may vary from olive brown to yellowish green, with a red rump (lower back). In both sexes, the underparts are entirely barred; wing coverts have pale spots and the outer tail and flight feathers are pale-barred. The male crown and nape (back of neck) are red (Fig. 1) while the female crown is blackish and the nape has pale feather tips (Fig. 2) (Winkler et al., 1995). Juvenile red-rumped woodpeckers appear similar to adult females (Gorman, 2014).

DISTRIBUTION. They are present in the neotropics, from Panama and Costa Rica to lowland Colombia and western Ecuador. The red-rumped woodpecker is also present in western Venezuela, east to northeast Venezuela and Trinidad and Tobago, with isolated populations in southern Venezuela (Fig. 3) (Winkler et al., 1995).

HABITAT AND ACTIVITY. In Trinidad and Tobago, this bird is an uncommon resident. It is present in habitats ranging from mangrove to forest in the island of Trinidad. In Tobago, it can be seen in main ridge forest (Kenefick et al., 2007). This species is also present in semi-open woodland (Ffrench, 2012). In Venezuela, *Veniliornis kirkii* can also be found on trees in xerophytic areas, second growth and along rivers (Meyer de Schauensee and Phelps, 1978). The red-rumped woodpecker is usually found in pairs or by itself (Ffrench, 2012). It may also occur in small groups and often joins forest bands of mixed species of birds (Meyer de Schauensee and Phelps, 1978).

FOOD AND FEEDING. These birds forage inside forest and on forest borders; they can be found foraging on smaller branches at all levels (Ridgely, 1976). Their diet consists mainly of small and medium sized boring insects and their larvae (Restall et al., 2006). Prey is dug out from under the bark or in the wood of the branches using their bills (Fig. 4) (Phaidon, 1978).

REPRODUCTION. This species breeds from December to March and in June. Moulting occurs in June and December. A clutch of three eggs with an average size of 23 x 17.5mm is produced in a nest made in a tree hole approximately 3-8m above the ground (Ffrench, 2012). The nests are dug by both parents, with the male bird doing the majority of the digging. The eggs undergo an extremely short incubation period of 12-17 days; incubating is alternated between both parents with the male spending the nights in the nest (Phaidon, 1978).

BEHAVIOUR. Juvenile woodpeckers travel back to their original nest behind their parent for approximately two weeks to two months. Red-rumped woodpeckers, just like all other woodpeckers, battle for territory during the early portion of the breeding season. Later on in the breeding season, the bird becomes defensive only in close proximity to the nesting hole (Phaidon, 1978). This species has a few distinctive sounds; a high-pitched phrase *queet-queet-queet* which is repeated and increases in intensity and speed towards the end (Ffrench, 2012), and a single *keer* note which resembles that of the kiskadee (Restall et al., 2006). Noisy rapid drumming can also indicate the presence of this woodpecker (Meyer de Schauensee and Phelps, 1978). The nest is kept clean by the parents, who remove faeces which are excreted in tough membranous sacs by the nestlings (Phaidon, 1978).

APPLIED ECOLOGY. The red-rumped woodpecker has a very large range and the population size appears to remain stable; there is no evidence to prove that this species is vulnerable and it is therefore listed as Least Concern (Birdlife International, 2016).

REFERENCES

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Fig. 2. Female red-rumped woodpecker perched on a branch.

[<http://www.hbw.com/ibc/species/red-rumped-woodpecker-veniliornis-kirkii>, downloaded 9 March 2017]



Fig. 3. Geographic distribution of the red-rumped woodpecker.

[<http://www.hbw.com/species/red-rumped-woodpecker-veniliornis-kirkii>, downloaded 9 March 2017]



Fig. 4. Male red-rumped woodpecker digging for food.

[<http://www.flickrriver.com/photos/ctam/4239127182/>, downloaded 9 March 2017]