

Orinoco Softtail (*Thripophaga cherriei*) Details: December 2006 (David Southall)

Mist Net Site:

Observations: 3 softtails, 2 with red eyes, one with pale eyes. Pale-eyed bird (immature?) captured first, one of red-eyed birds captured later on same day, third bird (red-eyes) captured on following day. The photos below of the birds in hand were all taken at the mist net site immediately after their capture. Although all the “in-situ” photos of the softtails at this site appear to be of the pale-eyed bird, this individual was foraging together with at least one of the red-eyed birds. The softtails’ foraging technique included close inspection of clumps of dry leaves and twigs in a manner reminiscent of a foliage gleaner. These softtails were also foraging very closely with up to three Black-chinned Antbirds. Whilst foraging on branches and stems protruding out of the water, the antbirds generally stayed between the water’s surface and approximately 1m above the water. The softtails foraged immediately above the antbirds - from approximately 50cm above the water’s surface to approximately 1.5m above the water. On some occasions at least one softtail and three antbirds were observed foraging very closely together - with all four birds within less than 1m of each other. The antbirds appeared to set the direction of the foraging party because when they flew across a small, 2m gap between bushes growing out of the water, the softtails followed and continued foraging above the antbirds on the other side. About 5m further on, the antbirds were observed to continue moving away and the softtails returned back to foraging on their own in the original bushes (possibly implying that although the territories partially overlapped, these softtail and antbird territories did not completely coincide). Later on, the antbirds returned to the same site and were again observed foraging with a softtail in close attendance.



Softtail habitat at mist net site



Immature (?) softtail foraging approximately 1 to 1.5m high in vegetation at mist net site



Immature (?) softtail foraging approximately 1 to 1.5m high in vegetation at mist net site



Immature (?) softtail at mist net site (immediately after capture)



Immature (?) softtail at Mist Net Site (immediately after capture)



First adult (?) softtail at Mist Net Site (immediately after capture)



First adult (?) softtail at Mist Net Site (immediately after capture)



Two of the three Black-chinned Antbirds observed foraging below softtails at mist net site

Caño Guacharaca:

Observations: Softtails responded to playback only at the very end of Caño Guacharaca (see photos of site below). Similar to mist net site, they were observed foraging in bushes that had stems growing vertically out of the water. Softtails were not heard or observed in the rest of Caño Guacharaca that typically included overhanging vegetation rather than plants protruding out of the water. At the site where the softtails were observed, the Caño was at its narrowest (close to where it formed a dead-end). An Amazonian Inezia was also foraging in this same vegetation. I was not able to see the eye colour of the softtails at this site. Near the entrance of the Caño (where the Caño is, maybe, 40m wide) some Rusty-backed Spinetails responded repeatedly to playback of the softtail call from thick vegetation that was on the banks and overhanging the water, but not obviously growing out of the water.



Site at end of Caño Guacharaca where softtail responded to playback



Site at end of Caño Guacharaca where Softtail responded to playback



Amazonian Inezia at site in Caño Guacharaca where Softtail responded to playback

Caño Grulla:

Observations: Softtails responded to playback at two or more sites in Caño Grulla (see photos of the first two sites below). Similar to the mist net site and Caño Guacharaca, softtails were observed foraging in vegetation protruding vertically from the water rather than in overhanging vegetation. The Caño was quite narrow (approximately 5 - 10m wide) along all of its length. At the first site the softtail responded to playback by flying across the Caño and spending approximately 1 minute observing and calling from perches at ca. 1-2m above the water in riverside saplings before returning to the dense vegetation growing out of the water on the south side of the Caño - see photo below of this individual that suggests it has eyes that are partially, but not fully red. The eye colour, between the colours of the two birds shown above from the mist net site, may indicate a nearly mature individual.



First site in Caño Grulla where softtail responded to playback



Softtail that flew across Caño Grulla at first site where softtail responded to playback



Second site in Caño Grulla where Softtail responded to playback