

## TWO NOTEWORTHY BIRD RECORDS

by R. P. French

**The White Bellbird.** On 30th March, 1969, at the Asa Wright Nature Centre in the Arima Valley I heard some strange bird calls coming from the other side of the valley. There were two calls, similar in quality, the first a high-pitched, musical note or notes, resounding for perhaps one second with a ringing tone; the other call was of two gong-like notes, the first lower than the second and seemingly different in syllabic structure — this may be roughly rendered as **aahn-king**. Recollecting a recording I had heard before, I suspected the bird to be a White Bellbird, **Procnias alba**. Although the bird was not definitely identified on that day, it was eventually located and seen by several visitors to the Nature Centre and confirmed in its identification.

The White Bellbird is a very rare bird in Trinidad, one having been collected by Leotaud (1866) and one by Wilbur Downs in the Maracas Valley in July 1954. The latter specimen is in the collection of the Trinidad Regional Virus Laboratory. Nothing else is known of its status in Trinidad, but it is either a resident confined to the more remote parts of the Northern Range or an occasional visitor to Trinidad from the mainland of South America.

A member of the Cotinga family, **Procnias alba** is slightly larger than its congener, the more common Bearded Bellbird, **P. averano**. The male is pure white all over, and has a strange wattle or caruncle at the base of the upper mandible. Herklots (1961) is wrong in saying that this wattle is upright (though it is pictured thus in some of the older books), for it hangs down on one side of the bill. In a very interesting article (1961) Barbara Snow described the calling of the White Bellbird in Guyana, explaining how this wattle is positioned during the call. She also mentioned that the wattle—which is two or three inches long while the bird is calling — was contracted to a third of its former length when the bird finished calling and flew off.

**The Trinidad Piping-Guan.** On 11th April, 1969, in thick forest in southeast Trinidad I had a good view of two Piping-Guans, **Pipile pipile**, locally known as Pawi or White-headed Guan. This is reputed to be the only endemic species of bird in Trinidad, though closely related to **P. cumanensis**, which is found on the mainland. Again the picture in Herklots gives a slightly misleading impression. The birds I saw had pale blue, almost whitish bare facial skin around the eye and this was the colour of the large whitish patch on the wing coverts. The white crest was not raised and the dark blue throat wattle was hard to see. The only call heard was a light whistle, and the birds, alarmed by our party, flew off in typical guan fashion, moving short distances from tree to tree.

### R E F E R E N C E S

- Herklots, G.A.C., 1961, The Birds of Trinidad and Tobago, Collins.  
Leotaud A., 1866. Oiseaux de l'île de la Trinidad. Chronicle Press.  
Snow, Barbara K. 1961. Notes on the behaviour of three Cotingidae. Auk 78, 150.

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