ABSTRACT

Phenology of the Trinidad Piping-guan, *Pipile pipile*

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The Trinidad Piping-guan or Pawi, *Pipile pipile*, is a Critically Endangered New World cracid endemic to Trinidad. Due to habitat loss and hunting, it is considered the second most threatened cracid worldwide and an "Immediate Conservation Priority" by the IUCN/BirdLife/WPA Cracid Specialist Group, yet it remains a poorly known species. This thesis presents the findings of a twenty-seven month field study that assessed the ecology, behaviour and phenology of the Pawi at two sites located in Grande Riviere and Morne Bleu, Trinidad. Pawi presence was recorded for 25.5% of 787 field hours and 69.9% of the 316 field sessions amounting to 664 individual sighting instances. Group size ranged from one to eight with an average group size of 1.6 birds. Fifty-three behaviours, including nine vocalisations and one mechanised sound, were described. With the exception of Drinking from epiphytes, maintenance behaviours showed no seasonality. The occurrence of Long-piping whistles and Wing-drumming were found to be significantly seasonal supporting phenological trends associated with rainfall and indicating an association with reproduction. It was also found that social behaviours occurred more often in the wet season when group size was higher. Pawi were found to have an extended breeding season. Courtship behaviours involved a display of bows and turns while vocalising. Pawi produce two or three large white eggs laid in a shallow nest platform. Mist-netting and baited noose traps failed to capture any Pawi and radio-tracking studies were not possible. This study emphasises the immediate need for protection and recovery of the species. The information gained has contributed to the development of protocols and methodology that will improve consistency of future studies. It has also contributed to two recovery and management strategy plans highlighting the need for education and awareness campaigns and improved legislation and enforcement.

Keywords: Animal Behaviour; Cracidae; Ecology; Phenology; *Pipile pipile*; Trinidad Piping-guan.