

OBSERVATIONS ON YELLOW-HEADED CARACARAS IN 1972.

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The Yellow-headed Caracara (*Milvago chimachima*), a bird of prey with scavenging habits, has been seen in Trinidad on only a few occasions, although it is found commonly on the mainland of South America. The published Trinidad records are of a pair on Chacachacare in March, and single birds in one or other of the large swamps in January, May and October (Herklots, 1961; French and French, 1966).

Since arriving in Trinidad in September 1971 I have seen this species frequently, mostly from my house on Santa Margarita Hill above St. Augustine but occasionally on the U.W.I. campus or in St. Augustine itself. At first only one bird was seen but on 23rd May 1972 a pair flew over the house at 0630. No birds were observed from then until 2nd September, when three flew over the house just before dusk; one, giving the characteristic wheezy scream of this species, seemed less distinctively marked on the wings and tail and may have been a juvenile. Three birds were seen again on 23rd September, but subsequent observations in October and November were of two birds only.

Apart from a few records in the early morning, birds were nearly always seen just before dusk, flying east along the foothills of the Northern Range. On several days they alighted in trees close to our house, but always moved on eastwards before dusk. It seems likely that they were heading for a roost somewhere above Tunapuna.

Although these observations add considerably to the published records for the Yellow-headed Caracara in Trinidad, they raise a number of questions - where do they go during the day? where do they roost? are they breeding? are there more in other parts of Trinidad? Unfortunately the answers to these questions cannot be found in my garden !!

References :

- French, R.P. and M. French (1966) Recent records of birds in Trinidad and Tobago. **Wilson Bull.** 78. 5-11.
Herklots, G.A.C. (1961) The Birds of Trinidad and Tobago. London.