Observations of the Sooty-capped Hermit (Phaethornis augusti) in southern Suriname, including records from a granitic inselberg.

Observations were made during a biological expedition organized by the Echo Echo Foundation and the Mulokot Foundation.

Abstract

We report observations of four individuals of the Sooty-capped Hermit (*Phaethornis augusti*) from Tebu Top, a granitic inselberg in the Wayana region of southern Suriname. Observations were made between 13 and 15 April 2026 and include records from both the summit of the inselberg and adjacent lowland tropical forest below 200 m altitude. Within Suriname, the species was previously known only from the Sipaliwini savanna. The observations from Tebu Top therefore represent the first documented records of P. augusti from lowland forest habitat in Suriname and provide new information on its habitat use, including foraging activity on inselberg vegetation.



Sooty-capped Hermit (Phaethornis augusti) at Tebu Top.

Introduction

The Sooty-capped Hermit (*Phaethornis augusti*) is a hummingbird species distributed primarily in northern South America, including parts of Venezuela, Guyana. Within Suriname, the species has only been reported from the Sipaliwini savanna. Large areas of southern Suriname remain ornithologically under-surveyed, particularly non-forest habitats such as granitic inselbergs. Here we document observations of P. augusti from the Wayana region, representing a notable extension of its known distribution.

Study area

Observations were made during a taxonomic, ecological expedition conducted between 13 and 15 April at Tebu Top, located in the Wayana region of southern Suriname (3.485882° N, 55.152594° W). Tebu Top is a granitic inselberg characterized by extensive exposed rock surfaces and sparse, specialized vegetation, surrounded by continuous lowland tropical forest. The summit lies at approximately 374 m altitude.



Observations

A total of four individual *Phaethornis augusti* were observed over three consecutive days. Observations were made on both the southern and northern sides of the inselberg, with the

two observation areas separated by approximately 1 km. Three individuals were recorded on the summit area, where they were actively foraging on flowering plants growing directly on the granite substrate. Birds were observed repeatedly visiting flowering plants while flying low above the rock surface.

An additional individual was observed at the base of the inselberg in adjacent lowland forest. This individual briefly hovered at close range in front of the observers before flying off into the forest understory.

Discussion

These observations constitute the first documented records of *Phaethornis augusti* from lowland tropical forest habitat in Suriname. Prior to this study, the species was only known within the country from the open savanna habitats of the Sipaliwini region. The records from Tebu Top therefore significantly expand the known habitat range of the species in Suriname.

The observation of multiple individuals across different days and spatially separated sites suggests that granitic outcrops are part of the species' habitat and the observations were not accidental And suggests that granitic outcrops may provide important floral resources for Phaethornis augusti.

The discovery of *Phaethornis augusti* at Tebu Top is likely due to limited survey effort in southern Suriname. Inselbergs are rarely surveyed, ecologically and ornithologically, despite their unique plant communities and potential importance as foraging habitats for nectarivorous birds. These findings underline the need for increased ornithological surveys in southern Suriname and greater consideration of inselberg ecosystems in assessments of speciesavian distribution and conservation.

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