

The Condor
Volume 105, No. 4
November 2003 C.E.
Abstracts

FEATURE ARTICLES

THE COMPLEX SONG DUET OF THE PLAIN WREN

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Manuscript received 8 October 2002; accepted 21 April 2003.

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Abstract. We studied the duet of the Caribbean-slope subspecies of the Plain Wren (*Thryothorus modestus zeledoni*) in Costa Rica. It is one of the most complex duets to have been described. The duet proper consists of rapid, highly coordinated alternation of “A-phrases” from the female and “B-phrases” from the male. While the female initiates this section with her A-phrase, this cyclical part of the duet is almost invariably preceded by an introductory “I-phrase” from the male, so that it is the male that initiates the performance. Each male has a repertoire of I- and B-phrases, and each female has a repertoire of A-phrases. These are specifically associated with each other to form a repertoire of duet types. We hypothesize that the pattern of song organization in this species facilitates more coordinated and precise duetting. The presence of the three components means that a full duet requires the cooperation of both members of the pair, strongly suggesting that it represents a mutually beneficial signal.

Key words: duetting, Plain Wren, song, Thryothorus.