

SHORT COMMUNICATIONS

**OBTAINING OFFSPRING GENETIC MATERIAL: A NEW METHOD FOR SPECIES WITH HIGH NEST PREDATION RATES**

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*Abstract.* Over the past decade, the field of molecular genetics has revolutionized our understanding of avian mating systems, by demonstrating that social bonds might not accurately reflect parentage because of unknown levels of cryptic mating (e.g., extra-pair copulations). Use of molecular genetics tools for paternity analysis requires genetic material from putative parents and nestlings. Unfortunately, high nest predation rates often preclude detailed genetic studies of tropical taxa. Here, we describe a nondestructive method that increases the efficiency of obtaining genetic material from offspring for a group of tropical passerines (Pipridae). The method entails replacing eggs with plaster replicas, incubating eggs artificially, and returning hatchlings to their original nests for further development. This method greatly improved our ability to sample offspring, as we collected genetic material from 100% of manipulated nests, compared to 51% of unmanipulated nests.

*Key words:* *ex situ incubation, manakin, nest predation, plaster eggs, Pipridae.*