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Received 28 March 2005; final revision accepted 7 November 2005

Two nests of Grass-green Tanager *Chlorornis riefferii* on the ground

More than a century ago, Sclater & Salvin[3], quoting T. K. Salmon, described the nest of Grass-green Tanager *Chlorornis riefferii* from Colombia as '...of considerable size, made of green moss, lined thickly within, and on the outside prettily ornamented with long tapering green ferns.' Since then, nothing has been added to our knowledge of the breeding biology of this attractive species. Here we report observations at two nests beside the road (00º01'S 78º41'W; 2,250 m) above Bellavista Cloud Forest Reserve, near Tandyapa, Pichincha province, Ecuador.

On 5 July 2004 HFG observed a pair of Grass-green Tanagers carrying moss to an uncompleted nest, 3 m up a 7 m-high bank covered in second growth. Both adults were present, but only one was observed approaching the nest with moss in its bill. Upon HFG's return on 24 August, the nest held a single nestling, with wing-pin feathers having broken their sheaths. Only one egg had been laid by 24 July. The nest was a bulky cup constructed on the ground within an existing clump of moss, such that the latter formed a protective dome over the cup (Fig. 4, p.80). The nest measured 17 cm wide by 15 cm tall on the outside, and the inner cup 9.5 cm wide by 6 cm deep. Both adults fed the nestling. On 11 September 2005 HFG visited a second nest, situated similarly, only 2 m from the first, and 2.1 m above the road. It contained a single nestling, with wing-pin feathers protruding from their sheaths by 5–10 mm. This nest had been found previously by RAG, at which time it had a single egg. On HFG's return, three days later, the nest was empty and adult breast feathers were scattered over the area, suggesting depredation. This nest was 21 cm wide by 12.5 cm tall outside, with inner cup measurements of 9 cm wide by 6.5 cm deep. Both nests were composed primarily of moss, with some fern fronds and black rootlets woven throughout, and both were thickly lined with soft, red-brown tree fern scales. For additional photographs of the nest and nestlings of Grass-green Tanager, see Greeney[1].

Whilst some genera of tanagers (especially *Chlorospingus*) have been reported nesting on the ground[2], this appears exceptional rather than the rule within the Thraupidae. The clutch size of one egg, observed in both nests here, agrees with that given by T. K. Salmon[3], although he gave no sample size. The small distance between the two nests, between years, suggests that they were built by the same pair of adults, and thus implies high nest-site fidelity by this species.

Acknowledgements
We thank John V. & the late Ruth Ann Moore and the Hertzberg Family Foundation for their generosity. The study was funded in part by a Rufford Small Grant and a Pamela & Alexander F. Skutch Award. We thank Mort & Phyllis Isler for thoughtful comments on the manuscript. The PBNHS continues its support of our natural history work. This is publication no. 93 of the Yanayacu Natural History Research Group.

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Received 31 October 2005; final revision accepted 13 November 2005