Predation on vertebrates by neotropical passerine birds

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Abstract

We investigated if passerine birds act as important predators of small vertebrates within the Neotropics. We surveyed published studies on bird diets, and information on labels of museum specimens, compiling data on the contents of 5,221 stomachs. Eighteen samples (0.3%) presented evidence of predation on vertebrates. Our bibliographic survey also provided records of 203 passerine species preying upon vertebrates, mainly frogs and lizards. Our data suggest that vertebrate predation by passerines is relatively uncommon in the Neotropics and not characteristic of any family. On the other hand, although rare, the ability to prey on vertebrates seems to be widely distributed among Neotropical passerines, which may respond opportunistically to the stimulus of a potential food item.

Keywords: diet, Neotropical region, passerines, vertebrate predation