

THE COLOURFUL GROSBEAKS

#8 BLACK-FACED GROSBEAK



Photo: "Just chaos"

The Black-faced Grosbeak, *Caryothraustes poliogaster*, is a large seed-eating bird in the cardinal family, which is a resident breeding species from south-eastern Mexico to eastern Panama.

The adult Black-faced Grosbeak is 16.5cm in length, weighs 36g, and has a heavy, mainly black, beak. It has a black face, yellow head, neck and breast, and an olive back, wings and tail. The rump and belly are grey. Immature birds are of a duller hue and have a dusky face.

The vocalisations include sharp *chip* or *tweet* calls, buzzes and whistles, and the song is a musical whistled *cher chi weet*, *cher chir weet*, *cher chi chuweet*.

The Black-faced Grosbeak seeks its food by foraging in shrubs or trees for beetles, caterpillars and other insects. It also eats fruit such as the Gumbo-limbo, *Bursera simaruba*, seeds, and nectar gathered from flowers or epiphyte bracts. Noisy flocks of up to twenty birds are formed, and is often observed in mixed-species feeding flocks along with honeycreepers and other tanagers as well as New World warblers. It generally avoids human-altered habitat, although it can sometimes be found in heavily degraded former subtropical or tropical forest.

This species breeds in the Caribbean lowlands and foothills from sea level to about 1000m altitude, and is found in the canopy and middle levels of dense wet forests, tall secondary growth, and semi-open habitats such as woodland edges and clearings. The cup-shaped nest is constructed with bromeliad leaves and other epiphytes and is usually placed 3-6m high in a small tree or palm. The breeding season is from April to June. The usual clutch consists of three brown-spotted greyish-white eggs.

R.V.C. with help from Wikipedia