

Neotropical Birding

THE BIRDING MAGAZINE OF THE NEOTROPICAL BIRD CLUB



Number 24 • Spring 2019



The Neotropical Bird Club aims to:

- foster an interest in the birds of the Neotropics amongst birdwatchers throughout the world
- increase awareness of the importance of support for conservation in the region
- mobilise the increasing number of enthusiastic birdwatchers active in the region to contribute to the conservation of Neotropical birds
- provide a forum for the publication of articles and notes about Neotropical birds, their identification and conservation and thus enhance information exchange in this subject area
- channel efforts towards priority species and sites, drawing attention to conservation needs
- publicise the activities of local groups and individuals, and improve liaison and collaboration between these same people and other birdwatchers

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Neotropical Birding

THE BIRDING MAGAZINE OF THE NEOTROPICAL BIRD CLUB

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Neotropical Bird Club

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Rufous-crowned Antpitta *Pittasoma rufoplieatum*, Mashpi Shungo, Pichincha, Ecuador, January 2017 (Pete Morris/Birdquest).

Welcome to *Neotropical Birding* 24!

Every year brings a birthday, of course, but some are more special than others. In 2019, this is the case for the Neotropical Bird Club, which celebrates the 25th anniversary of its founding. For details on how the NBC is marking this milestone, see Club Noticeboard on page 78. In brief these comprise a celebratory dinner (15 August 2019, to coincide with the British Birdwatching Fair), a special 25th issue of *Neotropical Birding*, a one-day conference on 26 October 2019, a new logo (cast your eyes a centimetre or two top right!), and 25 free online memberships for 2019!

We are doing a bit of celebration ourselves in this issue of *Neotropical Birding* – albeit of the region’s fabulous birds and birding. We start with an article on the staggeringly gorgeous and once-mythical Rufous-crowned Antpitta *Pittasoma rufopileatum* at Alejandro Solano-Ugalde’s forest-filled *finca* in Pichincha province, Ecuador (page 3). We have guides to exciting



birding sites in Atlantic-Forest Brazil (page 9) and Amazonian Ecuador (page 19). Jeremy Flanagan presents worrying news from Peru, following fires in Cajamarca, which have destroyed an important site for the globally threatened and endemic

hummingbird, Grey-bellied Comet *Taphrolesia griseiventris* (page 55).

We have an examination of what the 2018 IUCN Red List update means for the Neotropics (page 48) whilst Raymond Jeffers escorts us on a journey through Mexico, on the NBC’s latest fundraising tour (page 40). Regulars include Tom Schulenberg’s inimitable round-up of taxonomic changes (page 31), a summary of new and interesting records across the Neotropics (page 62) and an update on the thriving NBC Conservation Awards Programme (page 71), for which the sky really does now seem to be the limit. A measure of success indeed for an organisation commemorating its silver anniversary.

James Lowen, Senior Editor

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Seeing **Rufous-crowned Antpitta** (and more!) at Mashpi Shungo reserve, Ecuador

Alejandro Solano-Ugalde

*In the past couple of years, some amazing photographs of Rufous-crowned Antpitta *Pittasoma rufopileatum* – an exquisite, unusual and rare Chocó endemic – have graced the internet. So, what’s the deal? Neotropical birder Alejandro Solano extends us an invitation to find out for ourselves.*



1-2 “Recently an adult male [Rufous-crowned Antpitta *Pittasoma rufopileatum*] has been trained to receive food from humans in the fashion now well known for *Grallaria antpittas*” (Greeney 2018). This is that selfsame antpitta, named ‘Shunguito’. Both images taken at Mashpi Shungo, Ecuador: **1** August 2018 (Andrés Vasquez N./Tropical Birding Tours); **2** January 2017 (Pete Morris/Birdquest; page 4).



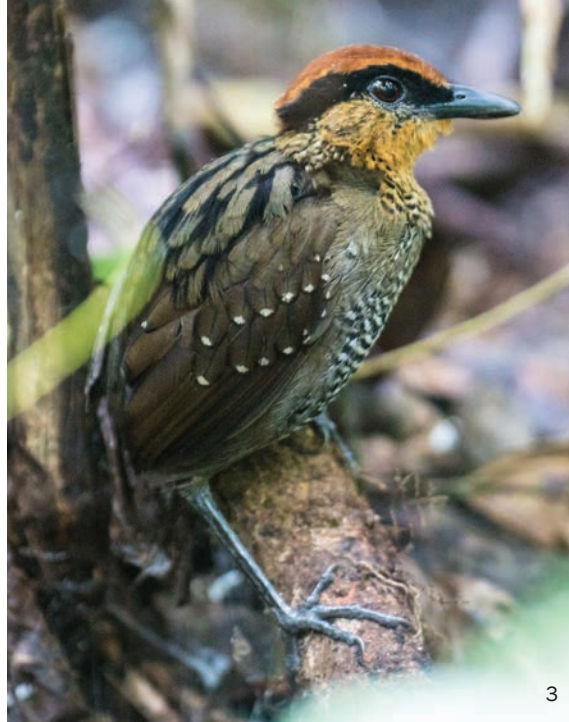
A gorgeous-looking bird, and one seldom seen to the point of myth. A bird that has long prompted chat, desire and rêverie among birders and even experienced field ornithologists. And a bird that can now be seen, with outstanding ease and at point-blank range, in the 'birdy' foothills of Ecuador's Chocó forests, from where this article has been penned. Hop forward... Rufous-crowned Antpitta!

The backstory

A decade or so ago a team of young field biologists (myself among them) were hired to conduct wildlife inventories in a remote part of Esmeraldas province, northwest Ecuador, with the aim of justifying the establishment of a new protected area for the Chachi, an ethnic group facing encroachment of their living space by timber companies. I remember fantasising about what Chocó endemic birds we might find. Northwest

Ecuador and western Colombia contain most of this fascinating bioregion. Lush tropical forest used to dominate the landscape but, largely due to logging and oil-palm monoculture, most of it has unfortunately disappeared.

After nearly two months of fieldwork many Chocó endemics made their way onto our lists... but one very important bird was seemingly missing! The forest looked and sounded perfect for it, but there was no sign of Rufous-crowned Antpitta anywhere we searched. Years unfurled until finally I had the pleasure of coming across a gaudy female in Reserva Mangaloma near Pachijal. This reserve has become known among birders as a good place to catch up with Banded Ground-Cuckoo *Neomorphus radiolosus* (globally Endangered) – a species that I was also happy to see here. Little wonder that this small reserve has turned into a favorite stop on Ecuador's northwestern birding circuit.



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3–4 “While foraging, [Rufous-crowned Antpitta *Pittasoma rufopileatum*] often pauses abruptly, freezing in a somewhat awkward-looking, spread-leg stance” (Greeney 2018). All images (of ‘Shunguito’) taken at Mashpi Shungo, Pichincha, Ecuador: **3** October 2018 (Philippe Moine/Terra Firme Birdwatching); **4** June 2015 (Xavier Amigo/Ecuador Experience).

The *Pittasoma*, in brief

Rufous-crowned Antpitta is one of two species in the genus *Pittasoma* which – despite being called antpitta by most authorities – is now housed in the family Conopophagidae (gnateaters) and is sometimes informally known as ‘gnatpitta’ among birders (e.g. Greeney 2018). It is endemic to the Chocó bioregion, found in three subspecies (*rosenbergi*, *harterti* and nominate *rufopileatum*) from northwestern Colombia south to northwestern Ecuador. Although “generally shy and difficult to observe, with a dearth of published behavioural information” (Greeney 2018), it is always seen on or close to the ground in very wet forests, generally below 1,100 m (Greeney 2013). It is poorly known, generally considered rare and local (Krabbe & Schulenberg 2003, Greeney 2018) and, at a global level, is categorised as Near Threatened (BirdLife International 2018). Until recently few birders and experienced field ornithologists – even those with the good fortune to live in Ecuador – had got as far as glimpsing one. Given its stunning appearance – barred and banded, spotted and scalloped, and with that glorious chestnut cap – every birder I know wants to see one. Now their dream may come true – and with both ease and convenience.

Mashpi Shungo reserve

The Ecuadorian Chocó has long been a part of the Neotropical birding trail, but each year now seems to reveal new sites to see exciting birds. Among them is the Mashpi area, which has featured at least twice in the pages of this magazine (Brinkhuizen 2013, Lowen 2017). Mashpi is the name of a river, a community, a now-famous luxury lodge and a whole valley. Now there’s another dimension to Mashpi – bird-rich tropical forest on a farm that produces high-quality, ‘bird-friendly’ and artisanal chocolate from locally grown cacao (see chocomashpi.com).

Mashpi Shungo is located in the valley of the same name, close to the community of San José de Mashpi. Covering 56 ha in an elevational range of 500–800 m, it includes both a forest-restoration project (covering 80% of the property) and a small private reserve. In 2015, we found a beautiful male Rufous-crowned Antpitta here. The encounter took us by surprise, but being taken aback didn’t stop us from thinking about how to make the most of the unexpected opportunity. After all, Ecuador is the ‘ancestral home’ of antpitta feeding (see, e.g., Collins 2006, Woods *et al.* 2011, Lowen 2017)!



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VISITING MASHPI SHUNGO RESERVE

From Quito take the main highway west past Nanegalito, the turn-off to Mindo and San Miguel de los Bancos. At km 104, turn right towards Pachijal. Roughly halfway between the latter community and Guayabillas, turn right following the sign to Mashpi. You will reach the Finca Agroecológica Mashpi Shungo after 3.5 km. In order to maximise your chances we appreciate you e-mailing, phoning or sending a WhatsApp message 2 or 3 days in advance (✉ jhalezion@gmail.com; tel: +593 967731489). The reserve does not offer food or lodging but we can help to organise these for you locally.

Check Mashpi Shungo's tanager flocks for gems such as **5** Blue-whiskered Tanager *Tangara johannae* (Valle del Cauca, Colombia, September 2017; Peter Hawrylyshyn, Canada) and **6** Scarlet-and-white Tanager *Chrysothlypis salmomi* (Anchicaya Valley, Colombia, September 2017; Robert Lewis/📷 wingbeats.org).

Seeing the *Pittasoma* at Mashpi Shungo

Accordingly, we worked hard for nearly two months and eventually managed to encourage this individual to come to earthworms along what is now known as the 'Pittasoma trail'. Since then we have been working with neighbours from the community, among them Danilo Chalá. Danilo has come to be nicknamed 'Don Grillo' ('Mr Cricket'), because it was with his assistance that we came to discover that the *Pittasoma* prefers being rewarded with crickets or grasshoppers over worms! We will be consolidating what we have learnt about this little-studied creature – in terms of territory, habitat and ecology – into a paper for publication in the near future.

Now that we and 'Shunguito', as the habituated individual has become known, understand one

another, our success rate with showing him off to numerous visiting birders and tour groups has reached 85%. Even better, when Shunguito emerges from the forest, he generally gives excellent, prolonged views at very close range (sometimes too close for the camera!). As the images that accompany this feature demonstrate, Shunguito has become rather a fine photographic model. How good can things get?

And there's more...

A number of other species of interest to birders, particularly exciting Chocó endemics, occur at Mashpi Shungo. These include Berlepsch's Tinamou *Crypturellus berlepschi*, which is presently best looked for along the first 100 m of trail, early in the morning. We are, however, seeking to 'train' individuals of this species to visit a feeding station on the same trail as Shunguito

Other interesting species to look for at Mashpi-Shungo (where all were photographed) include **7–8**: **7** Rose-faced Parrot *Pyrilia pulchra* (August 2008; Murray Cooper/@murraycooper); **8** Blue-tailed Trogon *Trogon comptus* (September 2010; Vincent Mouret/Terra Firme Birdwatching).



which will make things even easier. Rose-faced Parrot *Pyrilia pulchra* and Orange-fronted Barbet *Capito squamatus* can be seen in the reserve's forest, but are actually easier to see at large figs *Ficus* sp. in areas where the habitat is being restored. Scarlet-and-white Tanager *Chrysothlypis salmomi* and Blue-whiskered Tanager *Tangara johannae* (Near Threatened) are stunning

frugivores that are mostly found at the more mature forest close to the first ridge along the Pittasoma trail. The trick to seeing Scarlet-and-white Tanager is to learn the vocalisations as the birds tend to occur solitarily high in the canopy (although sometimes join flocks). For the exquisite Blue-whiskered Tanager, scanning fast-moving mixed flocks is usually the best approach; look out for a bird peering under branches (a distinctive behaviour when you get your eye in).

After a morning birding the forest, visitors are invited to take a farm-to-bar chocolate tour; Ecuador justly prides itself on producing the world's best chocolate! In the wider grounds of Mashpi Shungo, there is a bird table stocked with bananas (perfect for seeing the commoner tanagers) and a natural (i.e. plastic-free) hummingbird garden; the combination provides a convenient place for birders to eat a packed lunch. You could stay longer – birding away the afternoon along the Río Mashpi perhaps, or exploring the habitat-restoration plots where, inspiringly, birdlife now abounds. In the early years of the reserve, 54 species of birds were identified in these plots; now over 180 species have been reported. Overall the reserve total currently stands at nearly 350 species, so there is lot to entertain you. Furthermore, visitor facilities are on the up. By the time you read this, the reserve should have launched its first website (www.mashpi-shungo-reserve.org) and, later this year, a campaign will be launched to build a much-needed canopy tower.



9 10

9 Collared Aracari *Pteroglossus torquatus* (March 2014; Murray Cooper/@murraycooper); and **10** Orange-fronted Barbet *Capito squamatus* (male excavating nest hole, December 2004; Murray Cooper/@murraycooper).



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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TRANS-ATLANTIC WEEKEND TWITCHES

To give a measure of the global interest in seeing an accessible Rufous-crowned Antpitta, I invited Pete Morris to clarify a throwaway remark (about a “weekend twitch from the UK”) that he made when he posted photos of Shunguito on the website surfbirds.com. Pete’s explanation makes for fascinating reading – and shows quite what a globalised world we now inhabit. Ed.

“I was due to lead Birdquest’s Southern Ecuador tour, so on the off-chance that the *Pittasoma* might still present, I booked travel via Quito with a few days stopover rather than flying direct to Guayaquil. The first morning I went to Mashpi Shungo and, with Alejandro Solano-Ugalde’s help, enjoyed brilliant views of the bird. Job done! Having already inspired UK world-lister Alan Lewis to fly to Japan for a weekend to twitch Baer’s Pochard [*Aythya baeri*], I let him know that he ought to visit Mashpi Shungo soon. I also texted two other friends, Dave and Sue Williamson, as I knew it was Dave’s most wanted bird in the world!”

“Alan was initially toying with visiting a couple of months later, then suddenly announced that he was coming the following weekend! Meanwhile, Dave and Sue, who were flying to Panama a month later, hastily rearranged their flights to travel via Quito. On his first day, Alan dipped – and was none too happy! Great things come to those who wait, however, and Shunguito appeared on cue the following day, much to Alan’s great relief. Smiles were restored, and Alan returned to Quito airport that evening for his flight back to London. Thankfully Dave and Sue’s visit was more straightforward and they saw the *Pittasoma* at the first attempt. In a couple of simple text messages, then, I instigated two successful trans-Atlantic twitches. And, since return, I’ve been telling everyone who will listen that they too need to go as soon as they can!”

Pete Morris, Birdquest

Birding Intervalles, Brazil

Fred Tavares

The Atlantic Forest at Intervalles, in São Paulo state, Brazil, has long attracted birders keen to see regional endemics, including a fascinating suite of globally threatened species. A Brazilian birder shares tips on birding this fabulous site.

With around 250 endemics among more than 1,700 resident or regularly visiting bird species, Brazil is undoubtedly one of world's top birding destinations. One of the country's richest habitats – in terms of rare and endemic species – is the much-depleted Atlantic Forest. One of the most important and best-

preserved areas of Atlantic Forest is Parque Estadual de Intervalles and its buffer zone, in southern São Paulo. Intervalles is a must-visit site for any birder looking for southeast Brazil's specialities. Part of the Serra de Paranapiacaba, the park lies within the largest area of continuous Atlantic Forest in Brazil. Its 40,700 ha range from 600–1,200 altitude.



1 Chestnut-backed Tanager *Tangara preciosa*, Intervalles, São Paulo, Brazil, September 2011 (Nick Athanas/Tropical Birding). Look for this stunning tanager in the canopy and along forest borders.

Overview

More than 400 species have been recorded at Intervalles, including over 30 endemic to Brazil. To bird this fantastic area I recommend taking at least three full days. During such a timeframe, it is possible to see 200-plus species, including numerous Brazilian endemics and globally threatened species. A few roads traverse the park and these are complemented by several few trails that go deeper into the forest. Both roads and trails can provide fantastic birding opportunities.

A few years ago, local guides started a feeding station in the forest near Pousada Onca-pintada (▲ 24°16'06.84"S 48°24'35.14"W). Rather than trays or platforms, food is put on or near a big log. It is amazingly successful, attracting sought-after terrestrial birds such as Solitary Tinamou *Tinamus solitarius* (Near Threatened), Spot-winged Wood-Quail *Odontophorus capueira*, Rufous-capped Formicarius *colma* and Short-tailed *Chamaeza campanisona* antthrushes, and (from January–August) Variegated Antpitta *Grallaria varia*.

Note that there are no other feeding stations in the park – so no bird table piled with fruit and laden with feasting tanagers nor sugar-dispensers for hummingbirds. That said... whenever I visit Intervalles I take some bananas with me. You can buy them at the market in Ribeirão Grande, the last town before Intervalles. Leave some outside your accommodation during the day in order to attract tanagers such as the much-desired Chestnut-backed *Tangara preciosa* and perhaps the colourful Yellow-fronted Woodpecker *Melanerpes flavifrons*.

Key birding sites

Although birding is generally really good throughout the park area, a few trails and other points stand out. This section summarises these, complementing the assessment with some tips on key birds to look for.

Lodges and the self-guided trail

The central area of the park around the lodges contains a self-guided trail, which provides access to secondary growth, marsh and lakes. It offers plenty of good birding. At night, Rusty-barred Owl *Strix hylophila* (Near Threatened) is the most frequently encountered owl. Around the lodges, a Stygian Owl *Asio stygius* regularly shows up for a few days from time to time, favouring the same perch near the park reception. The marsh by reception is good for Blackish Rail *Pardirallus nigricans* and the normally elusive Red-and-white Crake *Laterallus leucopyrrhus*. Swallow-tailed



2

2 'Atlantic' Royal Flycatcher *Onychorhynchus (coronatus) swainsoni*, Intervalles, São Paulo, Brazil, December 2013 (Nick Athanas/Tropical Birding). Famous for its fantastic crest, this chunky tyrant-flycatcher builds a large hanging nest, usually over a stream.

Cotinga *Phibalura flavirostris* (Near Threatened) breeds near reception from September–December, and gives excellent views. The endemic and Near Threatened Black-legged *Dacnis nigripes* nests every year around the lake or near Pica-Pau Lodge. In forest, listen for the frog-like vocalisations of the endemic and Near Threatened White-breasted Tapaculo *Eleoscytalopus indigoticus* and look for include Giant *Batara cinerea* and Large-tailed *Mackenziaena leachii* antshrikes. Another great area to spend some time is around the research station at Sede de Pesquisa (▲ 24°16'24.39"S 48°24'58.84"W), which is *en route* to Carmo Road. This is a great place to look for species such as the highly vocal Bare-throated Bellbird *Procnias nudicollis* (Vulnerable; can be common August–December), Dusky-tailed Antbird *Drymophila malura* and Chestnut-backed Tanager.

The Carmo Road

This 30-km-long road is probably the most productive place to bird, passing through well-preserved forest. It leaves the central park (930 m altitude), starting c.2 km southwest of the lodges (specifically, just beyond the research station of Sede de Pesquisa), and descends roughly southwest



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3-5 Intervales' star trio of antshrikes. **3** Female Giant Antshrike *Batara cinerea*, Intervales, São Paulo, Brazil, October 2017 (Nick Athanas/Tropical Birding). A very large antshrike, with a loud and distinctive call that is frequently heard at Intervales. **4** Male Large-tailed Antshrike *Mackenziaena leachii*, Algulhas Negras road, Rio de Janeiro, October 2012 (Nick Athanas/Tropical Birding). A beautiful antshrike of higher-elevation forest. **5** Male White-bearded Antshrike *Biatas nigropectus*, Morro da Turquia, Pomerode, Santa Catarina, September 2012 (Adrian Rupp Birding Tours). To encounter this globally threatened species, listen and look in areas of *Chusquea* bamboo.



4

INTERVALES: THE PRACTICALITIES

Getting there Parque Estadual de Intervales (▲ 24° 16'06.3"S 48° 24'49.7"W; 📍 petaronline.com.br/intervalles/) lies 280 km west of São Paulo. From that city take the toll road SP280 (named Rodovia Castelo Branco) towards Tatuí. At Tatuí turn onto state (and toll) road SP127 to Capão Bonito. From here take road SP181 to Ribeirão Grande. Once in Ribeirão Grande look for the signs to Parque Estadual Intervales. From Ribeirão Grande to the park entrance is 25 km on a dirt road. Ribeirão Grande is the last possible place for fuel before the park. All roads are in good condition.

When to go Although definitely worth a visit at any time, the best period is early July to early December. Note that the austral winter of June–August can be fairly cold (with temperatures reaching freezing). Rain is standard, so come dressed accordingly.

Where to stay and eat There is ample, well-located and fairly cheap accommodation inside the park. The park administration operates four lodges (pousadas) within the upper (northwest) reaches of Intervales, all at or near the reception (▲ 24° 16'03.86"S 48° 24'53.82"W); a fifth lodge is on the way. All are popular, so book well in advance (✉ reservasintervalles@gmail.com; ☎ 0055 15 3542 1511). Birders favour Pica-Pau Lodge (which has a balcony from where canopy birds can be observed); Esquilo and Lontra are also good, while Onça Pintada is the cheapest. Rooms are simple and clean; most have private bathrooms and hot water. Lodges have common areas with a fireplace – which is very welcome when compiling your checklist of an evening. There is also a campsite; tents can be hired upon request. For food, the park restaurant adjacent to Pica-Pau serves breakfast, lunch and dinner; best to book in advance. Early breakfast can be obtained for a small supplement.

Communications Prepare to disconnect from the outside world. There is presently no mobile phone reception within the park. If necessary, you can arrange with reception to make landline calls. Internet is provided near the park reception, but is very slow.

Local guides On all trails and roads bar the self-guided trail, it is mandatory to be accompanied by a registered local guide. Book yours when you reserve your accommodation. The guides know the park really well, have fantastic eyes and ears, and really like birding. Although they do not speak English, they do speak fantastic 'birding' and know all the birds' scientific names. Show them your wish list, and they will show you the birds.



6

6 Male Helmeted Woodpecker *Celeus galeatus*, Intervales, São Paulo, Brazil, October 2016 (Nick Athanas/Tropical Birding). Generally a difficult bird to see, but Intervales is a great place to get a decent look at this globally Vulnerable species.

to reach the ranger station at Alecrim (200 m). It is quiet, free of traffic and packed with birds. Even on a busy day you might see no more than a couple of cars – probably other birders. All birding can be done along the roadside. On a good day you can see more than 130 species. Note that, unless it has been dry, you probably need a 4x4 to drive all bar the first 10 km of the road.

The road offers some great viewpoints for raptor-watching. In recent years, a pair of Grey-bellied Hawk *Accipiter poliogaster* has nested here. Other species to look for include Mantled Hawk *Pseudastur polionotus* (Near Threatened), White-necked Hawk *Amadonastur lacernulatus* (Vulnerable) and Black Hawk-Eagle *Spizaetus tyrannus*. Very recently there was a fantastic record of Crested Eagle *Morphnus guianensis* (Near Threatened).

This is the best place to see Black-fronted Piping-Guan *Pipile jacutinga* (Endangered): look for its main food source, the Jussara palm *Euterpe edulis*. Search areas of bamboo *Guadua tagoara* for seeding plants and you may find the specialist pair of seedeaters, Buffy-fronted *Sporophila frontalis* and Temminck's *S. falcirostris* (both



7 Spot-winged Wood-Quail *Odontophorus capueira*, Intervalles, São Paulo, Brazil, November 2017 (Fred Tavares/Brasil Aventuras Birding Tours). An unobtrusive terrestrial bird that often gives good views at the feeding station.

Vulnerable). In tracts of *Chusquea* bamboo, in particular, you stand a chance of the sought-after White-bearded Antshrike *Biatas nigropectus* (Vulnerable) and the striking Black-billed Scythebill *Campylorhamphus falcularius*. Three endemic furnariids – White-collared Foliage-Gleaner *Anabazenops fuscus*, Pale-browed Treehunter *Cichocolaptes leucophrus* and Pallid Spinetail *Cranioleuca pallida* – are easily found on the Carmo Road.

This is also the best area for the elusive Helmeted Woodpecker *Celeus galeatus* (Vulnerable). It is good for Black-cheeked *Conopophaga melanops* and Rufous *C. lineata* gnateaters, and for Bare-throated Bellbird. Where streams cross the road, look for Star-throated Antwren *Myrmotherula gularis* in the undergrowth (it can also be seen elsewhere in the park). A must-see bird along the road is Crescent-chested Puffbird *Malacoptila striata* (Near threatened endemic). The endemic 'Atlantic' Royal Flycatcher *Onychorhynchus (coronatus) swainsoni* (considered Vulnerable by BirdLife International) breeds here from September–December. Of the park's four species of *Phylloscartes* tyrannulet, two are both endemic and Near Threatened: Sao Paulo *P. paulista* and Oustalet's *P. oustaleti*. Excitingly, neither is difficult to see along the Carmo Road.

Other classy species to look for here include: Solitary Tinamou *Tinamus solitarius* (Near Threatened), Saffron Toucanet *Pteroglossus bailloni* (Near Threatened), Slaty Bristlefront *Merulaxis ater* (Near Threatened; favours rocks or dense vegetation), Pin-tailed Manakin *Ilicura militaris*, Cinnamon-vented Piha *Lipaugus lanioides* (Near Threatened; can be common), Brown Tanager *Orchesticus abeilli* and Black-legged Dacnis.

Trilha do Mirante da Anta

Mirante Trail begins just in front of Pica-Pau Lodge at $\blacktriangle 24^{\circ}16'04.62''S$ $48^{\circ}24'34.69''W$ and ascends gradually for 2.5 km to reach 1,050 m altitude. Focus on finding bamboo-loving species here, including Spotted Bamboowren *Psilorhamphus guttatus* (Near Threatened), White-bearded Antshrike and an antbird trio: Ochre-rumped *Dryophila ochropyga* (Near Threatened), Dusky-tailed and Ferruginous *D. ferruginea*. Other highlights include Lineated *Dryocopus lineatus* and Robust *Campephilus robustus* woodpeckers, Such's Antthrush *Chamaeza meruloides*, Short-tailed Antthrush, 'Atlantic' Royal Flycatcher (which nests by Lago Negro) and Green-throated Euphonia *Euphonia chalybea* (Near Threatened).



8

8 Azure-shouldered Tanager *Tangara cyanoptera*, Intervalles, São Paulo, Brazil, November 2013 (Fred Tavares/Brasil Aventuras Birding Tours).

9 Look for Long-trained Nightjar *Hydropsalis forcipata* (male, Intervalles, São Paulo, Brazil, September 2010; Fred Tavares/Brasil Aventuras Birding Tours) along the Capão Bonito road after dark.



9

Trilha do Lageado

This 5-km-long trail (starting at \blacktriangle 24°15'47.41"S 48°26'00.91"W) is the most reliable place to encounter the endemic Blue-bellied Parrot *Triclaria malachitacea* (Near Threatened), which particularly visits 'carrapicho' *Acanthospermum australe* shrubs during May–July. Other good birds to look for here include Helmeted Woodpecker, Oustalet's Tyrannulet, the tricky-to-see Russet-winged Spadebill *Platyrynchus leucoryphus* (Vulnerable), Crescent-chested Puffbird and 'Atlantic' Royal Flycatcher.

Barra Grande Road

This road starts near the lodges at \blacktriangle 24°16'02.35"S 48°24'34.85"W, and twists roughly eastsoutheast for 45 km to São Pedro nucleus. There is really good birding throughout – including the first 2 km (which is best done on foot). Notable species include Mantled Hawk, Black-fronted Piping-Guan, Black-capped Screech-Owl *Megascops atricapilla*, occasional Silky-tailed Nightjar *Antrostomus sericocaudatus*, Crescent-chested Puffbird, Giant Antshrike, Bare-throated Bellbird, Pin-tailed Manakin, Golden-chevrons Tanager *Tangara ornata*, Azure-shouldered Tanager *Tangara cyanoptera* (Near Threatened) and Black-legged Dacnis.

Main road from Capão Bonito

Along the main road between the park and Capão Bonito, a nocturnal highlight is the spectacular Long-trained Nightjar *Macropsalis forcipata*. The bird shows up shortly after dusk, and local guides know its favoured couple of spots. Not long ago there were a couple of sites inside the park where it was possible to see the species, but those sites no longer seem active.

Other birding tips

Nearly 20 hummingbirds have been recorded at Intervales. Some only occur at lower altitudes (i.e. away from the birding trails) and are best looked for elsewhere in southeast Brazil. The three key species are Purple-crowned Plovercrest *Stephanoxis loddigesii*, Dusky-throated Hermit *Phaethornis squalidus* and Brazilian Ruby *Clytolaema rubricauda*. The latter is widespread and can be seen in almost every trail and road of the park; it particularly favours flowers of *Fuchsia* sp. The best places to see the Plovercrest and Hermit are close to one another, for they lek near



10 Violet-crowned Plovercrest *Stephanoxis loddigesii* (male, Intervales, São Paulo, Brazil, October 2015; Renato Paiva) leks along the Carmo Road.

the entrance to the Carmo Road along the trail that starts at \blacktriangle 24°16'32.59" S 48°25'05.18"W.

Long-tufted Screech-Owl *Megascops sanctaetatarinae* can also be seen quite frequently, especially outside the park. Tawny-browed Owl *Pulsatrix koenigswaldiana* also occurs. Plain Parakeet *Brotogeris tirica* can be seen frequently in many areas of the park. Pileated Parrot *Pionopsitta pileata* can be seen fairly often. White-browed Woodpecker *Piculus aurulentus* (Near Threatened), Blond-crested Woodpecker *Celeus flavescens* and Ochre-collared Piculet *Picumnus temminckii* are all fairly common and should be easily found.

Perusing mixed flocks moving through the understorey, you should also encounter White-browed *Anabacerthia amaurotis* (Near Threatened) and Black-capped foliage-gleaners *Philydor atricapillus*, Gray-bellied *Synallaxis cinerascens* and Rufous-capped *Synallaxis ruficapilla* spinetails plus Sharp-billed Treehunter *Heliobletus contaminates*.

>> BIRDING SITES INTERVALES, BRAZIL

11 Swallow-tailed Cotinga *Phibalura flavirostris* (Intervales, São Paulo, Brazil, October 2015; Fred Tavares/Brasil Aventuras Birding Tours) breeds near reception, as does **12** Black-legged Dacnis *Dacnis nigripes* (Intervales, São Paulo, Brazil, August 2015; Renato Paiva).

13 Look among mixed flocks for Sao Paulo Tyrannulet *Phylloscartes paulistus* (Intervales, São Paulo, Brazil, August 2015; Renato Paiva).



11



12

Intervales has a superb collection of antbirds. In addition to those already mentioned, Squamate Antbird *Myrmoderus squamosus* is fairly widespread. Mouse-coloured Tapaculo *Scytalopus speluncae* is also easily found, as is the endemic Hangnest Tody-Tyrant *Hemitriccus nidipendulus*. The endemic Hooded Berryeater *Carpornis cucullata* (Near Threatened) can be seen in several areas; listen for its loud, distinctive call. Red-ruffed Fruitcrow *Pyroderus scutatus* can be seen all year round and generally is a bird you will bump into at some point. The endemic Serra do Mar Tyrant-Manakin *Neopelma chrysolophum* is not difficult to find. Finally, three endemic tanagers to look for are Brassy-breasted *Tangara desmaresti*, Rufous-headed *Hemithraupis ruficapilla* and Olive-green *Orthogonys chloricterus*.

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(E) stands for generally recognised Bolivian endemic.

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Amazon lodges in Ecuador: an overview

Sam Woods, Scott Olmstead and José Illanes

Every birder – and pretty much every non-birder with a vague interest in the world around them – has heard of the Amazon. But fathoming how to go birding there may not be immediately obvious. This article makes the case for visiting Ecuador’s great Amazonian lodges.

Working as bird-tour leaders in South America, we are regularly consulted for advice about how and where to bird the Amazon. The well-publicised biological diversity of this immense region makes it an inevitable place for world birders to visit at some point in their lives. Because it encompasses several countries, however, many are unsure of where to make their first (and sometimes only) visit. Even allowing for a slight bias (given that two of us live in the country), we propose Ecuador as the most

natural destination for one’s first Amazonian birding – first and foremost due to its proximity to a major international airport (in this case, in the capital of Quito). After a very short flight from the high Andes down to the lowlands, travellers can continue onward to a variety of excellent ‘jungle’ lodges, even arriving in time for afternoon birding and dinner. Moreover, several lodges – those outlined in this article – are equipped with comfortable accommodation and provide excellent bird guides to help you find key species.



Always on the Amazonian agenda are birds such as **1** Bare-necked Fruitcrow *Gymnoderus foetidus*, Sani Lodge, December 2018 (Sam Woods/Tropical Birding Tours).

All photos were taken in the Ecuadorian Amazon at one of the lodges featured in the text.

Six popular lodges

This article seeks to showcase Ecuador’s six best-known Amazon lodges favoured by birders and to help you identify which may most readily match your personal interests. We are not suggesting that you confine yourself to a single lodge of course, as each one featured has its own distinctive offer. You might, for example, combine lodges on either side of the Río Napo so that you can see species restricted to one bank or the other. Similarly, a lodge that offers fine canopy birding may complement one that provides great ground-level birding which maximises the chances of finding understorey species. We have greatly enjoyed visiting all the lodges covered – and are resolutely not providing personal opinions on which is ‘best’. Instead, this article highlights some differences between the lodges in terms of budget, facilities and key bird species – to help you make a more informed personal choice. The locations featured comprise four large establishments along the Río Napo (La Selva Lodge, Sacha Lodge, Sani Lodge and Napo Wildlife Center

– collectively known as the ‘Napo lodges’) and two smaller sites away from there (Shiripuno Amazon Lodge and Garenó Lodge).



Amazon birding in Ecuador: what is it like?

Wildlife lodges throughout the Amazon seem to follow a similar, well-honed strategic approach. Each has a central area with guest accommodation, kitchen, dining room etc. in close proximity. It complements these with a network of trails running through particular forest types and microhabitats, enabling visitors to see different bird species on each outing. Trails do not necessarily depart from the lodge itself, so access often requires a combination of walking, canoeing and motorboat travel. The four larger lodges also have canopy infrastructure (towers or walkways) that makes them especially appealing, as well as the added bonus of river islands, a uniquely Amazonian birding experience offering localised species. Most lodges are also involved in local conservation initiatives; for example, Sani Lodge helps the Sani Isla community operate a turtle-rehabilitation project. Some sites – such as river islands and clay licks along the Napo, plus the ‘Providencia trail’ south of the Napo – can be visited whichever Napo lodge you stay at. Understandably, however, canopy facilities are only accessible to guests of the respective lodge.

Since the various birding sites visited from each lodge can be fairly spread out it might take you an hour or more to reach the morning’s primary location, depending on how much birding you do along the way. To maximise your

Amazonian visitors are enchanted by birds such as **2** Hoatzin *Opisthocomus hoazin*, Sani Lodge, December 2016 (Pablo Cervantes Daza/Tropical Birding Tours) and **3** Paradise Tanager *Tangara chilensis*, Sani Lodge, May 2015 (Nick Athanas/Tropical Birding Tours).



EDITOR'S NOTE

For the avoidance of doubt, the comments made by the authors in relation to all or any of the six lodges are not, and should not be taken to be, recommendations or representations made by the NBC, its Council, the Senior Editor or the Editorial Committee. No verification of those comments has been undertaken by, or on behalf of, the NBC.

birding productivity then, expect early starts with a pre-dawn breakfast. Rubber boots are highly recommended and all lodges provide a selection for visitors who have not brought their own; note, however, that the two smaller lodges have a more limited range available.

All lodges have a roster of excellent local wildlife guides with impressive knowledge of the forest and its wildlife. Not all are English speakers – but most lodges do have (or can arrange) at least one or two local English-speaking bird guides. In addition, a native guide (typically from a local indigenous community) usually accompanies groups, providing logistical support (carrying supplies, piloting a motorised canoe) and offering supplemental natural-history and cultural insights. Normally the same birding guide and native guide will accompany you throughout your stay, devising your programme (with your input, if you wish) and taking you out. All lodges offer visits to nearby communities, allowing you to meet local people, sample traditional foods and purchase typical crafts.

Generally speaking, each day will include one or two guided outings to different birding spots. Amazon birding is at its best for the first couple of hours after sunrise, so the number of mornings you have at a lodge dictates how many trails and birding attractions you visit. Afternoon outings are typically quieter, although of course good birds can be found at any time of day.

So how long should you stay? The final morning of your visit is often dedicated to departure, so for the river-based Napo lodges, a five-night stay will afford you four full mornings at the lodge (usually enough to explore the full variety of birding options available). A four-night stay will undoubtedly leave you wishing for more. Six or seven nights provide flexibility to compensate for rained-off outings, or to track down difficult and potentially uncooperative target birds and to visit a local community without feeling like you are sacrificing valuable birding time. As far as the species list goes, the law of diminishing returns does apply, but even after a week at the same lodge



4

4 Salt licks are an attraction of the Río Napo. Psittacids attracted to minerals include Yellow-crowned Parrot *Amazona ochrocephala*, Río Napo, December 2016 (Pablo Cervantes Daza/Tropical Birding Tours).

you are unlikely to go a morning without seeing something new and spectacular. (The exception to these guidelines would be Gareno Lodge, which offers less varied habitats and fewer birding sites. Most groups find that a three-night stay at Gareno is adequate, especially if you can dedicate most of the morning to birding on your departure day.)

Overview of the lodges

For each lodge, we provide simple information about the facilities, pricing, location and birding opportunities. Here are some important caveats and clarifications that will help the reader interpret our accounts. Overall, note that the four 'Napo lodges' have similar bird lists and offer high-end facilities. The other two lodges (Shiripuno and Gareno) differ significantly from that quartet in terms of birds and facilities.

Category and facilities We have split the lodges into two categories: 'standard' (affordable for most birders) and 'high-end' lodges (pricier but offering higher-quality service and facilities). Prices are as quoted to us by the lodges in late 2018 or early 2019 – and clearly may change over time. Note that all of the lodges except Gareno include round-trip river transportation in their pricing.

Location All lodges bar Shiripuno and Gareno are accessed by river from the port city of Coca (formal name: Puerto Francisco de Orellana), located on the Río Napo and merely a 30-minute flight from Quito. Gareno is reached by road via the small city of Tena, south of Coca. Shiripuno is reached by a combination of road and river travel heading south from Coca.

Considerations Conveyed in short-hand, these points are highly subjective, so we accept that one person's pros may be another's cons. For example, the remoteness of Shiripuno Lodge is a big plus for some people, yet for others the additional travel time may seem like a disadvantage. This is simply



5

Amazonian Ecuador holds ample trogons: **5** Green-backed Trogon *Trogon viridis*, Sani Lodge, May 2015 (Nick Athanas/Tropical Birding Tours); **6** Black-tailed Trogon *T. melanurus*, Sani Lodge, May 2015 (Pablo Cervantes Daza/Tropical Birding Tours).



6

a matter of personal taste: we mean no offence to readers or lodges through our comments. Note that lodges on the north bank of the Río Napo enjoy less-contiguous forest than those on the south side.

Key bird species Many widespread, common Amazonian species are likely to be seen at all lodges; examples include Black-fronted Nunbird *Monasa nigrifrons*, Violaceous Jay *Cyanocorax violaceus*, Gilded Barbet *Capito auratus* and Yellow-tufted Woodpecker *Melanerpes cruentatus*. But there are also many species that are quite localised and/or rare. We have attempted to indicate the lodges where such target species are found most frequently – both within Fig. 7 (which covers species regularly occurring at three or more lodges) and within the individual account for each lodge (for less ‘widespread’ species). (Note that mention of these species neither means that you should expect to see them, nor that they do not occur at the other sites – but simply serves as a guide as to where you are more likely to encounter a particular sought-after species.)

We mention a few **key habitat types**, so it is worth familiarising yourself with these here. **Flooded forest** refers to permanently or seasonally inundated forest; in contrast, **terra firme forest** never floods. The latter holds the greatest bird diversity, but each forest type holds many species that do not occur in the other. Extensive, easily accessible flooded forest is only found at La Selva, Sacha, Sani and Napo Wildlife Center. In the Río Napo, there are many **river islands** that are constantly being made and destroyed as the river responds to rainfall by changing volume and course. River islands are only accessible from the four Napo lodges. A number of species are restricted to these (see box below), but the islands on which they occur varies with stage of

RIVER-ISLAND SPECIALITIES

Olive-spotted Hummingbird *Leucippus chlorocercus*, Grey-breasted Crake *Laterallus exilis*, Pied Lapwing *Vanellus cayanus*, Spot-breasted *Colaptes punctigula* and Rufous-headed *Celeus spectabilis* woodpeckers, Black-and-white Antbird *Myrmochanes hemileucus*, Castelnau’s Antshrike *Thamnophilus cryptoleucus* (Near Threatened), Parker’s *Cranioleuca vulpecula* and White-bellied *Mazaria propinqua* spinetails, Mottle-backed Elaenia *Elaenia gigas*, Spotted Tody-Flycatcher *Todirostrum maculatum*, Amazonian Black-Tyrant *Knipolegus poecilocercus*, Riverside Tyrant *K. orenocensis*, Lesser Wagtail-Tyrant *Stigmatura napensis*, Orange-headed Tanager *Thlypopsis sordida*, Bicoloured Conebill *Conirostrum bicolor* (Near Threatened), Caqueta *Sporophila murallae* and Lesson’s *S. bouvronides* seedeaters, and Oriole Blackbird *Gymnomystax mexicanus*.

7 Key bird species common to three or more of the lodges profiled

Key R = regular day-roost site for a nocturnal species; • = target species found frequently at the specified lodge; ^{NT} = Near Threatened species.

Species	La Selva	Sacha	Sani	Napo	Shiripuno	Gareno
Marbled Wood-Quail <i>Odontophorus gujanensis</i> ^{NT}	•	•		•		
Great Potoo <i>Nyctibius grandis</i>	R	R	R	R		
Ladder-tailed Nightjar <i>Hydrosalis climacocerca</i>	•	•	•			
Hoatzin <i>Opisthocomus hoazin</i>	•	•	•	•		
Crested Owl <i>Lophotrix cristata</i>	R	R	R	R		R
Black-banded Owl <i>Ciccaba huhula</i>		•		•	•	
Blue-crowned Trogon <i>Trogon curucui</i>		•	•	•		
White-chinned Jacamar <i>Galbula tombacea</i>		•	•			
Great Jacamar <i>Jacamerops aureus</i>			•		•	•
Lettered Aracari <i>Pteroglossus inscriptus</i>	•	•	•			
Red-necked Woodpecker <i>Campephilus rubricollis</i>				•	•	•
Orange-winged Parrot <i>Amazona amazonica</i>	•	•	•	•		
White-plumed Antbird <i>Pithys albifrons</i>				•	•	•
Lunulated Antbird <i>Oneillornis lunulatus</i>				•	•	•
Dot-backed Antbird <i>Hylophylax punctulatus</i>	•	•	•	•		
Chestnut-belted Gnateater <i>Conopophaga aurita</i>	•	•	•			
Ash-throated Gnateater <i>Conopophaga peruviana</i>				•	•	•
Hairy-crested Antbird <i>Rhegmatorhina melanosticta</i>				•	•	•
Thrush-like Antpitta <i>Myrmothera campanisona</i>			•	•	•	
Long-billed Woodcreeper <i>Nasica longirostris</i>	•	•	•	•		
Point-tailed Palmcreeper <i>Berlepschia rikeri</i>	•	•	•	•		
Dusky-chested Flycatcher <i>Myiozetetes luteiventris</i>	•		•	•		•
Sulphury Flycatcher <i>Tyrannopsis sulphurea</i>	•	•	•	•		
Citron-bellied Attila <i>Attila citriniventris</i>	•	•		•	•	
Amazonian Umbrellabird <i>Cephalopterus ornatus</i>	•	•	•	•		
Plum-throated Cotinga <i>Cotinga maynana</i>	•	•	•	•		
Spangled Cotinga <i>Cotinga cayana</i>	•	•	•	•		
Purple-throated Cotinga <i>Porphyrolaema porphyrolaema</i>	•	•		•		
Bare-necked Fruitcrow <i>Gymnoderus foetidus</i>	•	•	•	•		
Wire-tailed Manakin <i>Pipra filicauda</i>	•	•	•	•		
Western Striped Manakin <i>Machaeropterus striolatus</i>			•	•		•
Cinereous Mourner <i>Laniocera hypopyrra</i>	•			•	•	
White-browed Purpletuft <i>Iodopleura isabellae</i>	•	•	•	•		
Black-capped Donacobius <i>Donacobius atricapilla</i>	•	•	•	•		
Hauxwell's Thrush <i>Turdus hauxwelli</i>	•	•	•	•		
Yellow-bellied Dacnis <i>Dacnis flaviventer</i>	•	•	•			
Turquoise Tanager <i>Tangara mexicana</i>	•	•	•	•		
Masked Tanager <i>Stilpnia nigrocincta</i>	•	•	•	•		
Paradise Tanager <i>Tangara chilensis</i>	•	•	•	•		
Opal-rumped Tanager <i>Tangara velia</i>	•	•	•	•		
Opal-crowned Tanager <i>Tangara callophrys</i>	•	•	•	•		
Olive Oropendola <i>Psarocolius bifasciatus</i>	•	•		•		
Casqued Oropendola <i>Cacicus oseryi</i>	•	•	•	•	•	•
Solitary Black Caciue <i>Cacicus solitarius</i>		•	•	•	•	

succession (e.g. Parker's Spinetail only inhabits 'young' islands). Moreover, accessibility also depends on local water levels. Usually, you will need to visit several islands to search for the full range of species. Even so, it is impossible to see all such taxa on a single visit, as many are difficult, rare, nomadic and/or unpredictable; Black-and-white Antbird *Myrmochanes hemileucus* is a case in point.

The four Napo lodges have access to the same two **clay licks**, which are frequented by a variety of parrots. Species regularly recorded are Scarlet Macaw *Ara macao*, Dusky-headed *Aratinga weddellii* and Cobalt-winged *Brotogeris cyanoptera* parakeets; Orange-cheeked *Pyrilia barrabandi* (Near Threatened), Blue-headed *Pionus menstruus*, Yellow-crowned *Amazona ochrocephala* and Mealy *Amazona farinosa* parrots. The globally Vulnerable Scarlet-shouldered Parrotlet *Touit huetii* also sometimes visits. With that explanation now complete, let's proceed to examining each of the six lodges in turn.

La Selva Lodge

Opened in 1986, La Selva is the region's oldest rainforest lodge and has the longest experience of the birding business. Benefiting from significant remodeling in 2012, it now features some of the finest facilities of the lodges covered here (on a par with Napo Wildlife Center). Like all 'Napo lodges', La Selva is a good choice for family trips. Located on the north bank of the Napo on Laguna Garzacochoa Lagoon (▲ -0.4983038, -76.3734679), a 2–3 hour motorboat ride from Coca.

Category and facilities High-end. From \$1,190pp for a 4-day/3-night package based on two sharing. Nineteen suites (capacity for around 50 guests); 24-hour electricity; internet; laundry service; spa; and canopy tower.

Considerations Luxury accommodation; privately-owned; shorter travel time (compared to Napo Wildlife Center and Shiripuno); located on the north side of Napo River; canopy tower; access to flooded and terra firme forests, river islands and clay licks; caters for both serious birders and casual groups (e.g. families); offers community/cultural excursions; English-speaking birding/wildlife guides available; and beautiful lakeside setting.

Key bird species Only reliable site for Sand-coloured Nighthawk *Chordeiles rupestris* and one of only two reliable sites for the Near Threatened Cocha Antshrike *Thamnophilus praecox*. Also look for: Bartlett's Tinamou *Crypturellus bartletti*; Zigzag Heron *Zebriulus undulatus* (Near Threatened); Long-tailed Potoo *Nyctibius*



8 La Selva and Sani lodges are the best places to see the Near Threatened Cocha Antshrike *Thamnophilus praecox* (female, Sani Lodge, June 2015; Pablo Cervantes Daza/Tropical Birding Tours).

aethereus; Banded Antbird *Dichrozona cincta*; Striated Antthrush *Chamaeza nobilis*; Orange-crowned Manakin *Heterocercus aurantiivertex*; Buff-breasted Wren *Cantorchilus leucotis*; Yellow-shouldered Grosbeak *Parkerthraustes humeralis*; and Velvet-fronted Grackle *Lamprospars tanagrinus*. **Key mammals** include Pygmy Marmoset *Cebuella pygmaea*, Dusky Titi Monkey *Callicebus molloch* and Colombian Red Howler Monkey *Alouatta seniculus*.

Sacha Lodge

Sacha opened in 1992, and now arguably allows the best access to canopy species in the Ecuadorian Amazon. Although four lodges covered here have their own canopy towers, Sacha doesn't stop there, also offering a metal canopy walkway in two separate areas. Accordingly, you should see more canopy species here than elsewhere. Sacha caters very well to both keen birders and casual family groups, with ample alternative activities such as piranha-fishing, a butterfly farm, swimming in the lagoon and broad-brush nature walks etc. Located on the north bank of the Napo, by Pilchicocha oxbow lake (▲ -0.4710657, -76.4591897), 2–3 hours by motorboat from Coca.

Category and facilities High-end. From \$1,050pp for a 4-day/3-night package based on

two sharing. Twenty-six rooms cater for up to 56 guests; 24-hour electricity; internet; laundry service; canopy tower and canopy walkway; and butterfly farm.

Considerations Privately owned; shorter travel time but less isolated than Napo Wildlife Center and Shiripuno; located on the north side of Río Napo; canopy tower and longest canopy walkway in Ecuadorian Amazon (276 m); access to flooded and terra firme forests, river islands, clay licks and cultural excursions; caters for both serious birders and casual groups; butterfly farm; English-speaking birding/wildlife guides available; excellent nocturnal photographic opportunities for frogs and insects around the butterfly farm; and beautiful lakeside setting.

Key bird species Most reliable site for Lined Forest-Falcon *Micrastur gilvicollis*. Also look for: Undulated *Crypturellus undulatus* and (the Near Threatened) Great *Tinamus major* tinamous; Slender-billed Kite *Helicolestes hamatus*; Slate-colored *Buteogallus schistaceus* and White *Pseudastur albicollis* hawks; Chestnut-capped Puffbird *Bucco macrodactylus*; Brown Nunlet *Nonnula brunnea*; Short-billed Leaf-tosser *Sclerurus ruficularis*; Striated Antthrush, Orange-crowned Manakin; and Yellow-backed Tanager *Hemithraupis flavicollis*. **Key mammals** include Pygmy Marmoset, Dusky Titi Monkey, Spix's Night Monkey *Aotus vociferans* and Colombian Red Howler Monkey.

Other interesting birds that form part and parcel of a typical visit to Ecuadorian Amazonia include (all photos by Pablo Cervantes Daza/Tropical Birding Tours): **9** Long-billed Woodcreeper *Nasica longirostris*, Sani Lodge, December 2016; **10** Scale-breasted Woodpecker *Ceileus grammicus*, Sani Lodge, December 2016; **11** Plum-throated Cotinga *Cotinga maynana*, Sani Lodge, December 2016; and **12** Lemon-throated Barbet *Eubucco richardsoni*, Sani Lodge, May 2015.



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Sani Lodge

Sani prides itself on its community ownership and sustainable business practices; the connection with the local community is tangible and the

Canopy towers or walkways provide intimate views of smart birds while avoiding the need to crane one's neck upwards: **13** walkway at Sacha Lodge (Nick Athanas/Tropical Birding Tours) and **14** tower at Sani Lodge (Nick Athanas/Tropical Birding Tours). From up high, look for birds such as: **15** Yellow-billed Nunbird *Monasa flavirostris*; **16** Cinnamon Attila *Attila cinnamomeus*; and **17** Masked Tanager *Stilpnia nigrocincta* (all photos: Sani Lodge, December 2018; Sam Woods/Tropical Birding Tours).

lodge arguably feels less 'touristy' than the other three Napo lodges. While boasting a similarly large capacity to Sacha and Napo Wildlife Center, it has not been established for as long so can feel less busy. It is currently the only Amazon lodge with bird feeders, making this a good choice for photographers. Located north of the Napo on Challuacocha oxbow lake (▲ -0.439735, -76.280336), a 2–3 hour motorboat ride from Coca.

Category and facilities High-end. From \$1,058pp for a 4-day/3-night package based on two sharing. Thirteen cabins (capacity for more than 50



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Amazon accommodation at **18–19** Sani Lodge (Sam Woods/Tropical Birding Tours) and **20** Shiripuno Lodge (Nick Athanas/Tropical Birding Tours).



19

guianensis (Near Threatened; most regular site, but still rare); Yellow-billed Nunbird *Monasa flavirostris*; Scarlet-crowned Barbet (at feeders); Buckley's Forest-Falcon *Micrastur buckleyi*; Cocha Antshrike; White-lored Antpitta; Masked Crimson Tanager (at feeders); and Ecuadorian Cacique *Cacicus sclateri*. **Key mammals** include Pygmy Marmoset, Colombian Red Howler Monkey, Poepig's Woolly Monkey *Lagothrix poeppigii*, and Spix's Night Monkey.

Napo Wildlife Center

This community-owned lodge was founded in 1998. It lies further from the Río Napo than the other Napo lodges so feels more secluded. It boasts good canopy facilities, flooded forest and 'south-bank' (of the Napo) specialities, an outstanding variety of primates, and excellent access to *terra firme* forest. On a par with La Selva Lodge for luxury. Well equipped to handle both hard-core birders and casual parties such as family groups. Located south of the Napo on Añagucocha oxbow lake (▲ -0.523497,-76.4394507), 2–3 hours by motorboat from Coca *plus* another 2 hours up a blackwater creek by small hand-paddled canoe.

Category and facilities High-end. From \$1,332pp for a 4-day/3-night package based on two sharing. Twenty cabins (capacity for more than 50 guests); 24-hour electricity; internet; two canopy towers (at the lodge and along the Napo).

Considerations Luxury accommodation; community-owned; relatively remote but thus longer travel time than La Selva, Sacha and Sani; two canopy towers in different habitats (thus with different birds); location amid the contiguous forest of the vast Parque Nacional Yasuni; access to flooded and terra firme forests, parrot clay licks, river islands and cultural excursions; caters for both serious birders and casual groups; English-

guests). Electricity is by generator and limited to certain hours each night; patchy Internet; canopy tower.

Considerations Community-owned; shorter travel time but less isolated than Napo Wildlife Center and Shiripuno; located north of the Napo; canopy tower; access to flooded and terra firme forests, river islands, clay licks and cultural excursions; caters for both serious birders and casual groups; English-speaking birding/wildlife guides available; beautiful lakeside setting. Internet unreliable compared with other Napo lodges.

Key bird species The *only* Amazon lodge with bird feeders. Arguably the best place anywhere to see the near-endemic Cocha Antshrike; regular sightings of the Near Threatened Harpy Eagle *Harpia harpyja* (albeit usually distantly from the canopy tower) and, recently, the only reliable Napo site for Brown Jacamar *Brachygalba lugubris*. Other targets are: Capped Heron *Pilherodius pileatus*; Grey-winged Trumpeter *Psophia crepitans* (Near Threatened); Black-banded *Anurolimnas fasciatus* and Rufous-sided *Laterallus melanophaius* crakes; Sungrebe *Heliornis fulica*; Crested Eagle *Morphnus*



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Jacamars brighten even the gloomiest Amazonian day (both Pablo Cervantes Daza/Tropical Birding Tours): **21** White-eared

Jacamar *Galbalcyrrhynchus leucotis*, Sani Lodge, December 2016; **22** Great Jacamar *Jacamerops aureus*, Sani Lodge, May 2015.

speaking birding/wildlife guides available; and beautiful lakeside setting.

Key bird species Probably the best site for herons (Zigzag, Capped, Boat-billed *Cochlearius cochlearius* and Agami *Agamia agami*, which is globally Vulnerable), Sungrebe and Black-necked Red-Cotinga *Phoenicircus nigricollis*. Other key birds include: Sapphire Quail-Dove *Geotrygon saphirina*; Black-bellied Cuckoo *Piaya melanogaster*; Ocellated Poorwill *Nyctiphrynus ocellatus*; Grey-winged Trumpeter; Chestnut-headed Crake *Anurolimnas castaneiceps*; Slender-billed Kite; Yellow-billed Jacamar *Galbula albirostris*; Chestnut-capped *Bucco macrodactylus* and White-chested *Malacoptila fusca* puffbirds; Brown Nunlet; Ringed Woodpecker *Celeus torquatus*; Yasuni Stipplethroat *Epinecrophylla fieldsaai*; Banded Antbird *Dichrozona cincta*; Ochre-striped Antpitta *Grallaria dignissima*; Orange-fronted Plushcrown *Metopothrix aurantiaca*; Ringed Antpipit *Corythopis torquatus*; White-crested Spadebill *Platyrrhynchus platyrhynchus*; (Amazonian) Royal Flycatcher *Onychorhynchus coronatus*; Cinnamon Manakin-Tyrant *Neopipo cinnamomea*; Dusky-tailed Flatbill *Ramphotrigon fuscicauda*; Blue-backed *Chiroxiphia pareola* and Green manakins *Cryptopipo*

PHOTOGRAPHY IN THE AMAZON

Although photography of animals such as frogs and butterflies is good at many Amazon lodges, and you may encounter photographable monkeys at canopy towers, bird photography is difficult. Sani Lodge (and only that lodge, currently) is attempting to address this by providing a series of feeding stations (as is commonplace in the Ecuadorian Andes). At the lodge itself, fruit feeders regularly attract Masked Crimson Tanager *Ramphocelus nigrogularis* and Scarlet-crowned Barbet *Capito aurovirens*. In the forest, feeding stations (while unpredictable) have found success with Wire-tailed Manakin *Pipra filicauda* and White-lored Antpitta *Hylopezus fulviventris*. Moreover, Sani may be the best lodge for photographing aquatic wildlife, with species such as Hoatzin, White-eared Jacamar *Galbalcyrrhynchus leucotis*, Greater Ani *Crotophaga major* and a variety of herons attracting lenses from boats on the blackwater lake.

holochlora; Buff-breasted Wren; Masked Crimson Tanager; and Green Oropendola *Psarocolius viridis*.

Among **key mammals**, this is the only reliable location in the region for Golden-mantled Tamarin *Saguinus tripartitus*, Monk Saki *Pithecia monachus* and Giant Otter *Pteronura brasiliensis*. Other exciting species include Pygmy Marmoset, Dusky Titi Monkey, Poepig's Woolly Monkey, Colombian Red Howler Monkey and South American Tapir *Tapirus terrestris*.

Shiripuno Amazon Lodge

A long list of rare or localised species not possible at any other Amazon lodge in Ecuador awaits more adventurous birders willing to invest time in getting to this more remote location. The forests hold some of Ecuador's best mixed flocks, with a mind-boggling variety of antbirds. Uniquely among the sextet of lodges profiled, Shiripuno is affiliated with a biological research centre. Although facilities do not match those of the Napo lodges, the avian rewards are perhaps higher than anywhere. The truly secluded location adjoins a massive protected area, where local people still live off the rainforest, avoiding contact with outsiders. Lies 80 km south of the Río Napo on the bank of the much smaller Río Shiripuno (▲ -1.1036822,-76.7317933). Access involves a 2.5-hour drive from Coca, then 3–4 hours downstream by motorboat.

Category and facilities Standard. From \$828pp for a 4-day/3-night package.

Simple accommodation with cold showers; recently upgraded to 24-hour electricity; neither Internet nor canopy tower.



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A key trio at Shiripuno Lodge (where these photos were taken in March 2017 by Sam Woods/ Tropical Birding Tours) comprises **23** Fiery Topaz *Topaza pyra*, the reclusive **24** Black Bushbird *Neotantes niger* and **25** Ash-throated Gnateater *Conopophaga peruviana*.

WHEN TO GO?

The short answer is whenever you can! If you haven't visited the Amazon before, you will see dozens if not hundreds of new species at any time of year. There are some seasonal weather patterns that can influence a birding trip; in particular December–April have traditionally been the rainiest months. However, precipitation is becoming less predictable, presumably a result of global climate disruption and landscape-scale changes in Amazonian forest. The boreal winter months offer the opportunity to see North American migrants, a thrill for many birders. Usually bird song peaks May–July.

Owl *Pulsatrix perspicillata*;
Fiery Topaz *Topaza pyra*;
Yellow-billed Jacamar *Galbula albirostris*; Spotted *Bucco tamatia* and White-chested *Malacoptila fusca* puffbirds; Yellow-throated Woodpecker *Piculus flavigula*; Red-and-green Macaw *Ara chloropterus*; Yasuni and Rufous-tailed *Epinecrophylla erythrura* stipplethroats; Chestnut-shouldered *Euchrepomis humeralis* and Rio Suno *Myrmotherula sunensis* antwrens; Banded, Wing-banded *Myrmornis torquata*, Riparian *Cercomacroides fuscicauda*, White-cheeked *Gymnopithys leucaspis* and Yellow-browed *Hypocnemis hypoxantha* antbirds; Pearly Antshrike *Megastictus margaritatus*; Black Bushbird *Neotantes niger*; Long-tailed *Deconychura longicauda*, White-chinned *Dendrocincla merula*, Ocellated *Xiphorhynchus ocellatus* and Elegant *Xiphorhynchus elegans* woodcreepers; Reddish-winged Bare-eye *Phlegopsis erythroptera*; Ochre-striped *Grallaria dignissima* and White-lored antpittas; Speckled Spinetail *Cranioleuca gutturata*; Ringed Antpiper; Zimmer's Tody-Tyrant *Hemitriccus minimus*; White-crested Spadebill; Cinnamon Manakin-Tyrant; Yellow-throated Flycatcher *Conopias parvus*; Rufous-tailed Flatbill *Ramphotrigon ruficauda*; Black-necked Red-Cotinga; Lemon-chested Greenlet *Hylophilus thoracicus*; Red-legged Honeycreeper *Cyanerpes cyaneus*; and Yellow-backed Tanager *Hemithraupis flavicollis*.
Key mammals include Monk Saki, Poepig's Woolly Monkey, Spix's Night Monkey, White-bellied Spider Monkey *Ateles belzebuth*, Colombian Red Howler Monkey, South American Tapir, Red Brocket Deer *Mazama americana* and Amazonian Brown Brocket Deer *M. neborivaga*.

Considerations Offers a long list of specialities. Provides a sensation of being in a remote, wilderness-like area. Major plus for adventurous birders looking for something different! However, limited electricity, and neither canopy tower nor internet. Longer travel time needed – which also means greater distance from hospitals in case of medical emergency.

Key bird species White-throated *Tinamus guttatus*, Bartlett's, Great and Variegated *Crypturellus variegatus* tinamous; Nocturnal *Nothocrax urumutum* and Salvin's *Mitu salvini* curassows; Grey-winged Trumpeter; Black-banded and Chestnut-headed crakes; roosting Rufous Potoo *Nyctibius bracteatus*; Spectacled

Gareno Lodge

Gareno has become famous among birders for the impressive suite of 'megas' that can dependably be found here, including Harpy Eagle, Rufous Potoo, Pavonine Quetzal *Pharomachrus pavoninus* and Fiery Topaz. A complicated relationship with the local indigenous community, simpler accommodation and a greater susceptibility to logistical hiccups mean that most visits to Gareno are fueled by a strong desire to see target birds (i.e. rather than an easy-going Amazon experience). Located in hilly forest south of the Napo at a somewhat higher elevation than the other lodges (370 m) and accessed by road, 4.5 hours drive from Quito, at ▲ -1.0353836,-77.3976195. During 2018, accommodation was revamped, with the old buildings closed and new ones (with 24-hour electricity) opened a 10-minute drive away. Gareno's location means that it is often combined in an itinerary with birding sites on the east Andean slope such as WildSumaco Lodge and/or Cabañas San Isidro.

Category and facilities Standard. From \$320pp for a 4-day/3-night package (excluding transport in and out). Six twin rooms with a capacity for up to 12 people. Limited electricity (a generator runs for a few hours at the restaurant in evenings). Neither internet nor canopy tower.

Considerations Now has 24-hour electricity. Neither canopy tower nor Internet. Accessed by road rather than river, so no boat experience. No flooded forest or clay lick, only terra firme. Hilly terrain so tougher trail walking. Forest

holds many special birds but less productive for mammals due to easy roadside access (and consequent high hunting pressure).

Key bird species include White-throated and Little *Crypturellus soui* tinamous; Harpy Eagle; Black Hawk-Eagle *Spizaetus tyrannus*; Nocturnal Curassow; Black-bellied Cuckoo; roosting Rufous Potoo; Fiery Topaz; Spectacled Owl; Pavonine Quetzal (only reliable place); Brown Jacamar; Spotted Puffbird *Bucco tamatia*; White-throated Woodpecker *Piculus leucolaemus*; Speckled Spinetail; Rufous-tailed Antwren; Yellow-browed Antbird *Hypocnemis hypoxantha*; Reddish-winged Bare-eye; Blue-backed Manakin; Flame-crested *Islerothraupis cristatus*, Fulvous-crested *Tachyphonus surinamus* and Yellow-backed tanagers.

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A key attraction at Gareno Lodge is the nesting pair of **26–27** Harpy Eagle *Harpia harpyja* (Sam Woods/Tropical Birding Tours).

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Splits, lumps and shuffles


Thomas S. Schulenberg

This series focuses on recent taxonomic proposals – descriptions of new taxa, splits, lumps or reorganisations – that are likely to be of greatest interest to birders. This latest instalment includes: the lump of Chaco Tinamou (and perhaps Amazonian Swift as well); proposed splits in Band-rumped Swift, Rusty-breasted Antpitta, Long-billed Gnatwren, Tropical Gnatcatcher and Red-throated Ant-tanager; a stunning new species of hillstar hummingbird; and a final (?) twist to the saga of the Bogota Sunangel.

Ciao, Chaco Tinamou

Spotted Nothura *Nothura maculosa* is a common and widespread tinamou, with a distribution that extends from northeastern Brazil south to central Argentina. At least eight subspecies are recognised, although these do not differ greatly amongst themselves: generally, however, populations are smaller and darker in the northern part of the range, and become larger and paler farther south. An area in western Paraguay,

just to the west of the range of Spotted Nothura, has been considered the home of a closely related species, Chaco Nothura *N. chacoensis*. The status of Chaco Nothura never has been clear, however, even to the experts. After all, it originally was described as a subspecies of Spotted Nothura (Conover 1937), although Conover later (Conover 1950) elevated it to species rank, on the assumption that its range meets or “may slightly overlap” that of Spotted. Conover’s suggestion of sympatry between Chaco and Spotted nothuras



1 Spotted Nothura *Nothura maculosa*, Anisacate, Córdoba, Argentina, June 2018 (Gerardo Serra). Paraguay’s sole endemic bird (‘Chaco Nothura’) bites the dust.

was shy on detail, but nonetheless was sufficient for most authorities to accept Chaco as a full species. Eventually, however, chinks in this notion started to appear. For example, Porzecanski (2003) found no diagnostic morphological or genetic differences between Chaco and Spotted nothuras. Most recently, Hayes *et al.* (2018) conducted an exhaustive review of the specimen evidence, finding no confirmation of sympatry, but they did confirm evidence of overlap in plumage. Tellingly, they also recorded vocalisations of nothuras from within the 'core' range of Chaco, and detected no differences from the song of Spotted. The inevitable conclusion is that Conover had it right the first time, when he considered *chacoensis* to be only a subspecies of Spotted Nothura. Lumps are rare these days, of course, but they do still happen!

Still sorting out the swifts

Neotropical swifts have posed many challenges over the years. Plumage differences often are very subtle, so that even in the hand some species are difficult to distinguish; and, of course, the identification challenge is even greater when one is dealing with swifts on the wing. The current classification of swifts of the genus *Chaetura* is based primarily on work by Manuel Marín (Marín 1997, 2000), who made a name for himself with in-depth research of the breeding biology of some difficult-to-study swifts; but Marín's taxonomic conclusions were based entirely on an analysis of plumage and morphology. Chesser and colleagues (Chesser *et al.* 2018) revisit the relationships of these small swifts, but now with a more molecular focus. Genetic studies often provide compelling evidence of relationships, of course, but with the caveat that the outcome depends in part on having all the samples correctly identified to begin with. In the present case, one of Chesser's collaborators is Charles Collins, the dean of Neotropical swiftologists, so that lends some assurance to the study.

The best news for list-oriented birders is that Band-rumped Swift *C. spinicaudus* constitutes three full species, as the Amazonian subspecies *aethalea* is more closely related to Pale-rumped Swift *C. egregia* than to other Band-rumped; the nominate subspecies *spinicaudus* of northern South America is 'sister' to Costa Rican Swift *C. fumosa*; and subspecies *aetherodroma* of Panama and northwestern South America is yet a third clade (lineage). Armchair ticks for the well-traveled birder, then, are in store; but pay close attention going forward, as these taxa are so



Band-rumped Swift *Chaetura spinicaudus* constitutes three full species, although two (including the taxon *aetherodroma*) do not yet have English names. **2** Band-rumped

Swift *Chaetura s. spinicaudus* or *latirostris*, Manaus, Amazonas, Brazil, April 2013 (João Quental). **3** *Chaetura aetherodroma*, Playa de Oro, Esmeraldas, Ecuador, June 2009 (Nick Athanas/Tropical Birding Tours).

similar in the hand that there do not seem to be established English names for two of these newly recognised species (*aetherodroma* and *aethalea*).

Moving on, Marín (2000) suggested that Grey-rumped Swift *C. cinereiventris* "might comprise more than one species", but did not pursue this notion in any depth. Chesser *et al.* also found evidence that Grey-rumped Swift is more than one species. They refrain from making taxonomic recommendations regarding this group, perhaps in part because they did not have samples from throughout the range of the species. But it is worth noting that subspecies *phaeopygos* of Central America is particularly divergent, genetically, from the other subspecies, and is one likely candidate for a future split. The wise birder will try to twitch Grey-rumped throughout its range, while waiting for the outcome of the usual 'further studies' that now are called for.

Finally, the so-called Tumbes Swift *C. ocyptes* (not a species recognised by the South American Classification Committee [SACC], whose taxonomy is used in *Neotropical Birding*) is very similar genetically to Short-tailed Swift *C. brachyura*; and indeed, most authorities treat *ocyptes* as only a subspecies anyway. Amazonian Swift *C. viridipennis* is essentially the same, genetically, as Chapman's Swift *C. chapmani*, and is recommended for a lump, which will be a sting. Meanwhile, the mysterious Ashy-tailed Swift *C. andrei* of Venezuela (another taxon not recognised as a species by SACC) continues to be a taxonomic

puzzle. Marín (1997) concluded that *andrei* was identical to a sympatric subspecies of Vaux's Swift *C. vauxi aphanes*, whereas Chesser *et al.* conclude that *andrei* is very distinct genetically, and clearly is a separate species. Given that experts find *andrei* and *aphanes* difficult to distinguish even in the hand, the task ahead will be for intrepid birders to develop robust field identification criteria for these two. Ready for the challenge?

Bye bye Bogota Sunangel?

The nomenclature of hummingbirds is littered with names based solely on one or a handful of old specimens, usually with only the vaguest of information about their geographic origins. Most of these oddities are believed to be rare hybrids between two known species (but see Schulenberg 2018 for a possible exception). Gary Graves has deduced the parent species behind many of these hybrids, so it was a stunning turn when Graves himself described a new species, Bogota Sunangel *Heliangelus zusii*, based on a single, ancient specimen from somewhere in the Colombian Andes (Graves 1993). The validity of this lost (and apparently extinct) species received a boost from a genetic study (Kirchman *et al.* 2010) that endorsed the recognition of Bogota Sunangel as a valid species (see Lees 2010).

4 The mother of what was long known as 'Bogota Sunangel *Heliangelus zusii*' transpires to be a female Long-tailed Sylph *Agelaiocercus kingii* (Rio Blanco, Manizales, Colombia, October 2014; Frédéric Pelsy).

The story took a further twist when an odd hummingbird that appeared at feeders at the Rogitama reserve in Colombia's eastern Andes initially was suspected to be an example of the long-lost Bogota Sunangel. Detailed study of its plumage, however, showed differences between the two, leading to the suggestion that the Rogitama hummingbird was a cross between Tyrian Metaltail *Metallura tyrianthina* and Long-tailed Sylph *Agelaiocercus kingii* (Stiles & Cortés-Herrera 2015). The latest development comes from Pérez-Emán *et al.* (2018), who analysed DNA from the sole specimen of Bogota Sunangel and from a feather of the Rogitama hummingbird. This genetic analysis suggests that Bogota Sunangel and the Rogitama hummingbird both are hybrids, with one of the parents of both being a female Long-tailed Sylph. In view of the differences between them, however, each probably had a different male parent, which for Bogota Sunangel has not yet been identified. And with that, Bogota Sunangel is a species is no more. The story is not over, however: this investigation into the origins of Bogota Sunangel is just a side note to a larger, ongoing project to investigate diversity across all of the sylphs, and there are strong hints that this will lead to future splits. Stay tuned!

Hello to a new hillstar

Hillstars *Oreotrochilus* are large hummingbirds of the high Andes. Five or six species usually are recognised, most of which are allopatric. Despite its small size, Ecuador teems with hillstar diversity: a form in which the male has a dull green crown but a brilliant green gorget (*stolzmanni*) occurs on the border with Peru (and either is recognised as a separate species, Green-headed Hillstar *O. stolzmanni* or as a subspecies of Andean Hillstar *O. estella*), whereas most of Ecuador is occupied by Ecuadorian Hillstar *O. chimborazo*, in which the entire head and throat of the male may be purplish-blue (subspecies *jamesonii*), or purplish-blue with a green lower throat (*chimorazo*). Even so, Francisco Sornoza-Molina was greatly surprised when he discovered yet another type of hillstar in southwestern Ecuador, in the Cordillea de Chilla-Tioloma-Fierro in El Oro and Loja. The male of this hillstar has a green crown, and its throat is much bluer (less purplish) than in any population of Ecuadorian Hillstar. Consequently Sornoza-Molina *et al.* (2018) describe it as a new species, Blue-throated Hillstar *O. cyanolaemus*. The limited genetic evidence on its relationships suggests, for starters, that all hillstars are very closely related; but also that Blue-throated may





5 Blue-throated Hillstar *Oreotrochilus cyanolaemus* (Cerro de Arcos, Loja, Ecuador, September 2018; Antonio Figueroa/@antoniostudiofoto) is an entirely new species that is apparently endemic to a tiny area of Ecuador. Surprisingly its closest relative appears not to be **6** Ecuadorian Hillstar *O. chimborazo* (Ecuador, October 2018; Hoa V. Pham/ASAV Photography), which is widespread in the country.

be, surprisingly, ever so slightly more closely related to *stolzmanni* and to Black-breasted Hillstar *O. melanogaster* of central Peru than it is to Ecuadorian Hillstar. Blue-throated Hillstar was discovered not a moment too soon: its geographic range is small, perhaps as small as only 100 km², in an area where many *páramos* are heavily grazed or burned. Large parts of its range also are under concessions for gold mining. Consequently Sornoza-Molina *et al.* make the grim assessment that Blue-throated Hillstar already may be Critically Endangered. Look out for an article on the amazing discovery of this hillstar in a future issue of *Neotropical Birding*.

Anticipating additional antpittas

Rusty-breasted Antpitta *Grallaricula ferrugineipectus* is a small antpitta of the understorey of humid forests of the Andes. Its distribution extends from Venezuela to Bolivia – unless, that is, one were to recognise the southern subspecies, *leymebambae*, as a separate species, Leymebamba Antpitta. This two-species arrangement was proposed by Ridgely & Tudor (1994), and later was adopted both by Ridgely & Tudor (2009) and by del Hoyo & Collar (2016), but this split has not yet been accepted by other

authorities. That should change following the publication of a new analysis of the relationships between these antpittas. Van Doren *et al.* (2018) found that they differ in so many ways that it's a wonder they ever were lumped in the first place: genetic analysis shows that Rusty-breasted (subspecies *ferrugineipectus* and *rara*) is sister to Slate-crowned Antpitta *G. nana*, whereas Leymebamba is more closely related to other species in the genus. Rusty-breasted and Leymebamba antpittas also differ in morphology and in song. Perhaps more surprising is what is uncovered in the patterns of variation within each (newly recognised) species. For example, the population of Rusty-breasted in the Santa Marta mountains of northern Colombia currently is included in subspecies *ferrugineipectus*, but is genetically distinct from other populations of that subspecies, as is another, apparently undescribed, population in Colombia's Cauca Valley. Similarly, there are vocal differences between populations of Leymebamba Antpitta on the west side of the Andes, in Ecuador and northwestern Peru, compared to those from the east side of the Andes of Peru and Bolivia. These differences are duly noted by Van Doren and colleagues, but apparently are subject to ongoing investigation, which, they promise, "will be published elsewhere". Once again, stay tuned.



Suspensions have been confirmed that **7** Rusty-breasted Antpitta *Grallaricula ferruginepectus* (Laguna Tabacal, La Vega, Cundinamarca, Colombia, January 2010; Nigel Voaden/[flickr.com/photos/nvoaden/](https://www.flickr.com/photos/nvoaden/)) and **8** Leymebamba Antpitta *Grallaricula leymebambae* (Reserva Geobotánica Pululahua, Pichincha, Ecuador, June 2013; Nick Athanas/Tropical Birding Tours) are separate species. The former may conceivably house further cryptic taxa, given that, for example, **9** the population in Colombia's Santa Marta mountains, currently considered to be subspecies *G. f. ferruginepectus*, is genetically distinct (Santa Marta mountains, Magdalena, Colombia, January 2012; David Brassington).

populations as a separate species, Chattering Gnatwren *Ramphocaenus sticturus*. This notion gets a big boost from a fairly comprehensive genetic survey by Smith *et al.* (2018), who found three clades within *Ramphocaenus*: *sticturus* and *obscurus* are at the 'base' of the genetic tree, with the remaining populations sorting out as two groups, those west and east of the Andes. Note that this also is entirely consistent with recognising not only Chattering Gnatwren as a species, but also with resplitting the *rufiventris* and *melanurus* groups. The songs of these two latter groups are much more similar to each other than either is to Chattering, however, and genetic

Unknotting the gnatwrens

Long-billed Gnatwren *Ramphocaenus melanurus* is a widespread insectivore, found from southern Mexico to southern Brazil. Early in the past century, two species were recognised, west (*R. rufiventris*) and east (*R. melanurus*) of the Andes, but these were lumped long ago (Zimmer 1931), and that seemed to settle the issue. More recently, however, gnatwrens have become much more interesting again. Harvey *et al.* (2014) report that two subspecies in southwestern Amazonia, *obscurus* and *sticturus*, differ from adjacent subspecies of gnatwrens by exhibiting large white tips to the outer rectrices and by having a very different song. There also is evidence, at least for *obscurus*, of local sympatry with 'standard' Long-billed Gnatwrens, with the two types also showing some habitat segregation. Harvey *et al.* propose recognising these white-tailed Amazonian

Our understanding of **10** Long-billed Gnatwren *Ramphocaenus m. melanurus* (Macarani, Bahia, Brazil, September 2016; João Quental) has changed, with the split of some Amazonian populations as **11** Chattering Antwren *R. sticturus* (Los Amigos Biological Station, Madre de Dios, Peru, August 2018; Alex Wiebe).





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Gnatcatchers *Poliioptila* have undergone a detailed, if not comprehensive, revision. Some of the protagonists involved include: **12** Guianan Gnatcatcher *P. guianensis paranensis* (Cristalino Jungle Lodge, Mato Grosso, Brazil, July 2014; Nick Athanas/Tropical Birding Tours); **13** Tropical (Maranon) Gnatcatcher *P. plumbea maior* (Marañón valley, Peru, October 2016 (Jason Leifester)); **14** Tropical Gnatcatcher *P. plumbea bilineata* (Olmedo, Guayas, Ecuador, March 2013; Nick Athanas/Tropical Birding Tours); and **15** White-lored Gnatcatcher *P. albiloris albiventris* (Cenote de Camino a Chunchucmil, Yucatán, Mexico, November 2017; Cory Gregory/Field Guides Birding Tours).

sampling of gnatwrens across northern Colombia, where the *rufiventris* and *melanurus* groups might meet, is incomplete. So... take the split of Chattering for now, and wait patiently on the rest: odds are the final split too will arrive before the story is over.

Plumbing the *Poliioptila*

Two separate teams, Smith *et al.* (2018) and Moura *et al.* (2018), turned their attention to the relationships of the gnatcatchers *Poliioptila*. Both studies rely on a genetic approach, and although

they differ somewhat in the genes that were analysed and the taxa (species and subspecies) that were sampled, the results of the two papers are in broad agreement. And my, oh my – it’s almost easier to list the species for which there is *not* find evidence for a split than to enumerate the many taxonomic revisions that are possible.

Let’s start with White-lored Gnatcatcher *P. albiloris*, which primarily occurs on the Pacific coast of Middle America, but has one population (*albiventris*) on the northern Yucatán Peninsula of southeastern Mexico. Perhaps not surprisingly,

Smith *et al.* find that *albiventris* is not closely related to other White-lored Gnatcatchers, but instead belongs with the group of subspecies of Tropical Gnatcatcher *P. plumbea* that occur from southeastern Mexico south to western Peru (sometimes known as the ‘White-browed’ group). (Moura *et al.* did not include any of the White-lored Gnatcatcher group in their study.)

Speaking of Tropical Gnatcatcher, the genetic relationships uncovered by both teams positively blow this ‘species’ into smithereens. Both teams find that three subspecies from South America – *plumbea* of the Guianan region and eastern Amazonia, *parvirostris* of western Amazonia, and east Brazilian *atricapilla* – are more closely related to Creamy-bellied Gnatcatcher *P. lactea* and Masked Gnatcatcher *P. dumicola* than they are to other subspecies of Tropical. Depending on the details of how these South American gnatcatchers are related to each other – details that are not yet completely clear – this signals anywhere from one to three species of ‘Tropical Gnatcatcher’ in central and eastern South America alone.

What’s left of Tropical Gnatcatcher forms three basic groups, which are related to each other, but they seem to have diverged from one another quite a while ago. One of these is the ‘White-browed’ group, mentioned above; another includes subspecies *plumbiceps* and *innotata* (and, presumably, *anteocularis*, although this subspecies was not sampled in either genetic survey), from northern and eastern Colombia to Venezuela and northern Brazil; and the final member of the trio is subspecies *maior* of the Marañón Valley in northern Peru. One could try to maintain all of these northern and western taxa in a single species, but given the levels of genetic divergence between the three, and keeping in mind that *maior* already is recognised as a separate species (Maranon Gnatcatcher) by some (e.g. Ridgely & Tudor 2009, del Hoyo & Collar 2016), one easily can see the way to recognising at least three species here as well. There seems to be no comprehensive survey of vocalisations across the range of Tropical Gnatcatcher, although it now seems to be badly in need of one, but already it is clear that songs do vary across the wide range of this species (e.g. Ridgely & Tudor 2009, Schulenberg *et al.* 2010).

Finally, these studies have implications for the Guianan Gnatcatcher *P. guianensis* complex; both teams included samples from this group, but Smith *et al.* had a better representation of taxa. Their results were that nominate *guianensis*, of the Guianas, is ‘basal’ to the overall Guianan Gnatcatcher group. But Slate-throated

Gnatcatcher *P. schistaceigula*, of Panama to western Ecuador, separates *guianensis* from other members of the group (Iquitos Gnatcatcher *P. clementsii*, and subspecies *facilis*, *paranensis* and *attenboroughi* of central Amazonian Brazil), all of which are very closely related to each other. At a minimum, this suggests splitting nominate *guianensis* from *facilis*, *paranensis* and *attenboroughi* (so far so good). One also could go all the way, and recognise each of the latter as separate species as well; but note that, in view of the low levels of genetic (and other) differences between them, another approach would be to include not only *facilis*, *paranensis* and *attenboroughi*, but also (gasp!) *clementsii* in a single species.

How many *Habia* ant-tanagers are there?

Red-crowned Ant-tanager *Habia rubica* is a common bird, and it is widespread, occurring from Mexico south to southern Brazil. But its distribution is surprisingly patchy, and it is not found at all in many areas in the Neotropics where it might be expected. A few years ago, Lavinia *et al.* (2015) reviewed variation across its broad range, making a preliminary assessment based on genetics, songs, and colouration. As noted previously in these pages (Lees 2015), Lavinia *et al.* suggested splitting Red-crowned Ant-tanager into at least three species: *H. rubicoides* in Middle America; *H. rubra* in northern and central South America; and *H. rubica* in the Atlantic Forest of eastern Brazil. Now Ramírez-Barrera *et al.* (2018) take another look at variation in this species; their approach is exclusively genetic, but they were able to include samples from more subspecies than did Lavinia and colleagues.

The new study also identifies three main clades in Red-crowned Ant-tanager, but with a twist: their three major lineages are the population in western Mexico (subspecies *affinis* and *rosea*); all other subspecies in Middle America; and finally, all South American subspecies. That said, each of these three main clades also includes additional genetic structure. For example, Ramírez-Barrera *et al.*’s South American group includes two pretty different genetic groups, one from Amazonia and one from the periphery of the continent (northern South America and eastern Brazil and Paraguay); the Middle American clade can be subdivided into populations from eastern Mexico (Veracruz and Oaxaca), from Yucatán south to Costa Rica, and from Panama; and even subspecies *affinis* and

>> SPLITS, LUMPS AND SHUFFLES



There may well be between three and seven species currently shoehorned into what we call Red-crowned Ant-tanager *Habia rubica*. Lavinia et al. (2015) split **16** taxon *rubra* (male, Tunapuna-Piarco, Trinidad and Tobago, February 2018; Kamal Mahabir) from **17** taxon *rubica* (male, Morretes, Paraná, Brazil, July 2011; Frederico Swarofsky). But what about **18** taxon *vinacea* (male, Canopy Lodge, Cocle, Panama, December 2014; Nick Athanas/Tropical Birding Tours)?

rosea are modestly divergent. So, three species of Red-crowned Ant-tanager? But if so, which three? Or, good grief, are there up to *seven* species? This is another species that now calls out for a comprehensive survey of song and plumage across all populations. Regardless, the usual adage applies: take no species for granted, no matter how common or widespread, and make sure to twitch them *everywhere* you find 'em!

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Acapulco to Veracruz – home to Mexico’s better endemics!

Raymond Jeffers

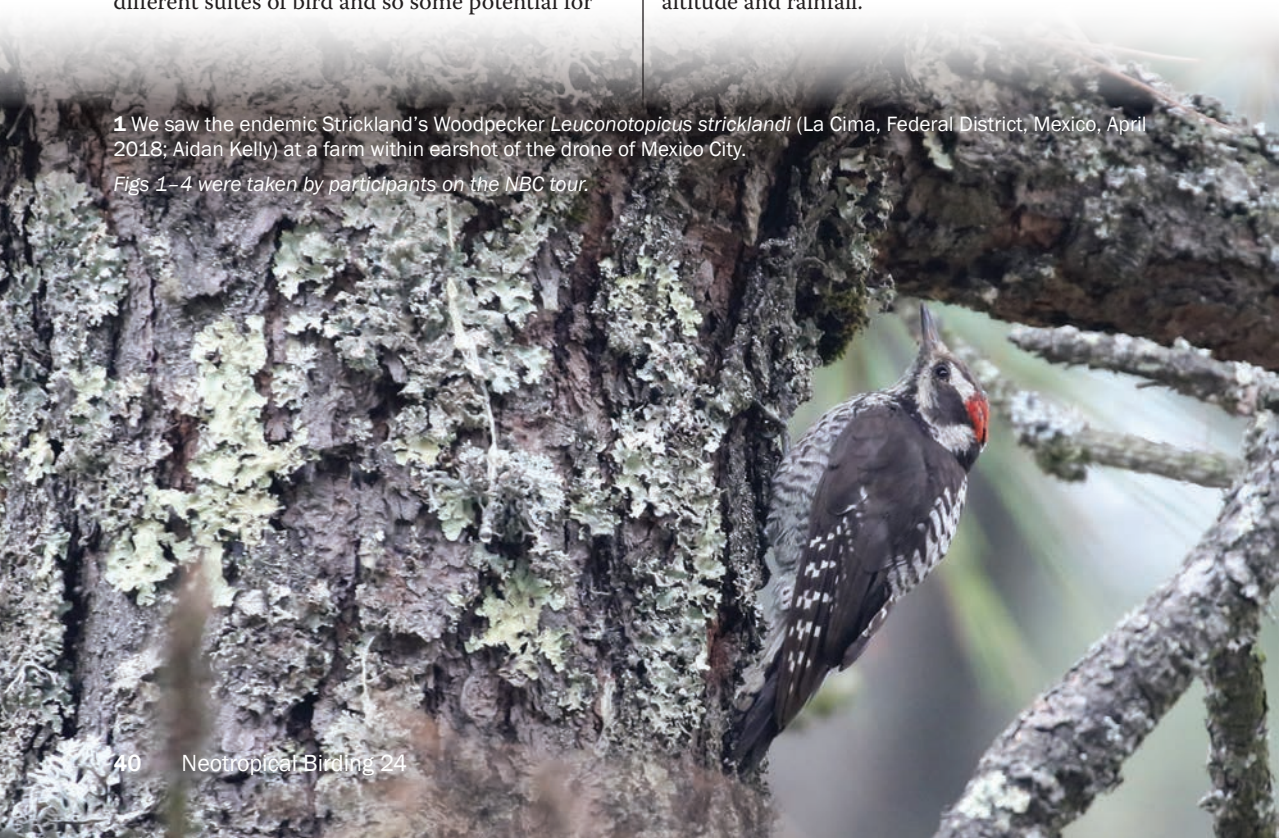
This report on the Club’s latest fundraiser trip in April 2018 suggests that birding in Mexico is not as you might have expected... For a start, we ‘marketed’ the tour as following one of ‘North America’s finest birding routes’. Yes, you did read that correctly: North America. For while the Club refers to its region as lying from ‘Middle’ America southwards, Mexico is also within North America according to most geographical definitions. Whatever, the route followed was undoubtedly one of the finest around. Travelling 1,000 km over 15 days, tour participants recorded 60 Mexican endemic species, 40 additional taxa endemic to Mexico and 33 regional endemics among a trip list of 475. The tour raised \$6,000 for Neotropical bird conservation.

If you peruse a map of central Mexico it becomes readily apparent that the most striking topographical feature of the country is a series of mountains with sea on either side. To the eye of a birder this looks like three distinctive birding habitats: Pacific slope, montane region and Caribbean slope. In turn that suggests three different suites of bird and so some potential for

endemism. However, when ‘on the ground’ it becomes obvious that the geographical picture is a little more complicated. For example, not only are there coastal areas with grassland, savanna and rocky islands (hosting seabird colonies) but also habitat in the montane region varies significantly from dry scrub to lush forest in relation with altitude and rainfall.

1 We saw the endemic Strickland’s Woodpecker *Leuconotopicus stricklandi* (La Cima, Federal District, Mexico, April 2018; Aidan Kelly) at a farm within earshot of the drone of Mexico City.

Figs 1–4 were taken by participants on the NBC tour.





2

2 Short-crested Coquette *Lophornis brachylophus* (Sierra Madre del Sur, Guerrero, Mexico, April 2018; Aidan Kelly). This Critically Endangered endemic was a tour highlight.



3

3 We had close views of Mexican Duck *Anas diazi* at UNAM Botanical Garden, Mexico City, April 2018 (Bill Moorhead).

Michael Carmody of Legacy Tours designed the NBC route to maximise hitting all these areas. Accordingly, the trip was essentially a transect across central Mexico from west to east. The itinerary was in such demand that two tours were run; this report describes the first (8–23 April 2018). To simplify matters let's divide the trip into four: the Pacific coastal strip west of Acapulco; the mountains of Sierra Madre del Sur and Sierra Madre de Guerrero; the interior; and the coastal wetlands near Veracruz. Under Michael's expert birding guidance and benefiting from his decades of experience in Mexico, the seven NBC participants were to cover numerous sites, see all the realistic targets, encounter bird conservation in action and enjoy Mexican hospitality every night!

Throughout this account, we use ^E to denote a taxon endemic to Mexico. Meanwhile, ^{RE} indicates a 'regionally endemic' taxon that occurs only in Mexico, the borderlands of the United States or northern Central America (north of Costa Rica).

Peaceful Pacific

Starting in the west we flew into the holiday zone of Ixtapa–Zihuantenajo, a stone's throw from Acapulco. From the air we could see sandy beaches, coastal lagoons, freshwater marshes and dry forest below clear blue skies. This augured well for our two full days allotted to 'Pacific birds'. Eschewing the recreational facilities on offer at our smart beach-side hotel, we started birding immediately in the company of Michael and our Mexican host, local birder, driver and man for all seasons, David Salas. In woodland beyond the hotel fence, our first endemics soon popped up West Mexican Chachalaca *Ortalis poliocephala*^E, Citreoline Trogon *Trogon citreolus*^E, Golden-cheeked Woodpecker *Melanerpes chrysogenys*^E and Sclater's Wren *Campylorhynchus humilis*^E. Next

into the notebook was a portentous male Black-and-white Warbler *Mniotilta varia*. A spectacle of Mexico at this time of year is the presence of North American passerines. By the time we flew out of Veracruz our total of logged New World warblers (Parulidae) was 32!

The next two full birding days were hot (in two senses of the word). On the first day and under the baking sun, our explorations took in beach, lagoon, estuary and woodland around Troncones plus a well-earned break at the Inn at Manzanillo Bay. The latter was, of course, devoted to studying, in the car park no less, an interesting subspecies of Northern Cardinal *Cardinalis cardinalis carneus* – known by some as 'Long-crested Cardinal' and a potential endemic species. Indeed, Mexico would seem to be nirvana for 'splitters'. Take, for example, the following septet of subspecies that we saw: Squirrel Cuckoo *Piaya cayana mexicana*^E; Scrub Euphonia *Euphonia affinis godmani*^E; Tropical Parula *Setophaga pitiayumi pulchra*^E; White-bellied Wren *Uropsila leucogastra pacifica*^E; Stripe-headed Sparrow *Peucaea ruficauda acuminata*^E; White-collared Seedeater *Sporophila torqueola torqueola*^E; and Blue Bunting *Cyanocompsa parellina indigotica*^E.

The following day centred on the playground of Playa Linda but we escaped the madding crowds for a mini-pelagic that brought Red-billed Tropicbird *Phaethon aethereus*, Blue-footed Booby *Sula nebouxii*, Masked Booby *S. dactylatra* and, rare for here, Heermann's Gull *Larus heermanni*. For the afternoon we lingered at the restful El Refugio de Potosi. Coming to the feeders were an array of 'hummers' glistening in the sunlight including Golden-crowned Emerald *Chlorostilbon auriceps*^E; Plain-capped Starthroat *Heliomaster constantii*; and Doubleday's *Cyanthus doubledayi*^E, Cinnamon *Amazilia rutila*, Ruby-



4 The Brigado de Moneterio of San Miguel Topilejo, with tour participants (La Cima, Federal District, Mexico, April 2018; Raymond Jeffers).

throated *Archilochus colubris* and Black-chinned *A. alexandri* hummingbirds. Naturally our haul incorporated endemics such as Colima Pygmy-Owl *Glaucidium palmarum*^E; Golden-cheeked Woodpecker *Melanerpes chrysogenys*^E; Flammulated Flycatcher *Deltarhynchus flammulatus*^E; Golden Vireo *Vireo hypochryseus*^E; Happy *Phuegopedius felix*^E and Sinaloa *Thryophilus sinaloa*^E wrens; Rufous-backed Thrush *Turdus rufopalliatus*^E; Red-breasted Chat *Granatellus venustus*^E and Yellow Grosbeak *Pheucticus chrysopeplus*^E. Regional endemics also kept flowing with Yellow-headed Parrot *Amazona oratrix*^{RE}, Yellow-winged (or Mexican) Cacique *Cassiculus melanicterus*^{RE} and Black-vented Oriole *Icterus wagleri*^{RE}.

Up hill and down dale

A short way from the coast the land rises gently into undulating mountains. Michael's plan was simple. Based in the small town of Atoyac de Alvarez we would take a winding road that accesses the lower, middle and upper elevations of Sierra Madre del Sur. After that we would move to the livelier town of Chilpancingo. This would afford us the opportunity to work the interior slopes of the Sierra Madre de Guerrero. We had five full days here and the reason for this became obvious: the mountains are rich in birds!

The avifauna swells at this time of year with many flycatchers and warblers from North

America. It was almost impossible for us to keep pace with the bird flocks. We 'enjoyed' the challenge of confusing 'Empid' (*Empidonax*) flycatchers testing our identification skills to the limit. After some debate we were confident that we had correctly(!) identified Willow *Empidonax traillii*, White-throated *E. albigularis*, Least *E. minimus*, Hammond's *E. hammondi*, Dusky *E. oberholseri*, American Grey *E. wrightii*, Pine *E. affinis*^{RE}, Pacific-slope *E. difficilis*, Cordilleran *E. occidentalis* and Buff-breasted *E. fulvifrons* flycatchers. Thankfully identifying the colourful 'Western' wood warblers present was less stressful (at least when they had the decency to stop disappearing around the back of big leaves). We noted Ovenbird *Seiurus aurocapilla*, Louisiana *Parkesia motacilla* and Northern *P. noveboracensis* waterthrushes; Yellow-breasted Chat *Icteria virens*; American Redstart *Setophaga ruticilla* and Northern Parula *S. americana*; plus Orange-crowned *Oreothlypis celata*, Nashville *O. ruficapilla*, Virginia's *O. virginiae*, MacGillivray's *Geothlypis tolmiei*, Magnolia *S. magnolia*, Audubon's *S. auduboni*, Black-throated Grey *S. nigrescens*, Townsend's *S. townsendi*, Hermit *S. occidentalis* and Black-throated Green *S. virens* warblers. Plus, to give our Parulidae list an authentic Middle American flavour we seasoned it with Red *Cardellina rubra*^E, Red-faced *C. rubrifrons*^{RE}, Rufous-capped *Basileuterus rufifrons* and Golden-crowned *B. belli* warblers together



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Figs 5–15 were all taken in (the country of) Mexico, albeit not on the NBC tour.

5 West Mexican Chachalaca *Ortalis poliocephala* (Reserva de las Biosfera Chamela-Cuixmala, Jalisco, August 2018; Daniel J. Field) is endemic to the deciduous forests of southwest Mexico.

6 Colima Pygmy-Owl *Glaucidium palmarum*, Tangolunda, Huatulco, Oaxaca, March 2017 (Steven Huggins) This newly recognised species (formerly lumped with Least Pygmy-Owl *G. minutissimum*) is endemic to Mexico.

7 Balsas Screech-Owl *Megascops seductus*, Xochicalco, Morelos, March 2017 (Steven Huggins). Other than Colima Pygmy-Owl, this is the only owl endemic to Mexico.

with Painted *Myioborus pictus* and Slate-throated *M. miniatus* whitestarts.

Starting with the Sierra Madre del Sur we were barely out of Atoyac before peering through branches to glimpse a static Lesser Ground Cuckoo *Morococcyx erythropygus*. There were plenty of other delights: Singing Quail *Dactylortyx thoracicus*^{RE}, White-faced Quail-Dove *Zenaidura macroura*^E, Mexican Hermit *Phaethornis mexicanus*^E, Mexican Violetear *Colibri thalassinus*^{RE}, White-tailed Hummingbird *Eupherusa poliocerca*^E, Wagler's Toucanet *Aulacorhynchus wagleri*^E, Grey-crowned Woodpecker *Colaptes auricularis*^E, Lilac-crowned Parrot *Amazona finschi*^E, Northern Barred-Woodcreeper *Dendrocolaptes sanctithomae* of the endemic race *sheffleri*^E, Unicoloured Jay *Apelocoma unicolor*^{RE}, Cinnamon-bellied



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8 Blue Mockingbird *Melanotis caerulescens*, Volcan de Fuego, Jalisco, April 2015 (Nigel Voaden; [flickr.com/photos/nvoaden](https://www.flickr.com/photos/nvoaden)) Although fairly common, it is both endemic and stunning.



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9 Golden Vireo *Vireo hypochryseus*, Teotitlán del Valle, Oaxaca, March 2015 (Nigel Voaden; [flickr.com/photos/nvoaden](https://www.flickr.com/photos/nvoaden)). Endemic to western Mexico, this vireo occurs in three subspecies from southern Sonora south to Oaxaca.

10 Grey Silky-Flycatcher *Ptiliogonys cinereus*, Teotitlan del Valle, Oaxaca, March 2015 (Nigel Voaden; [flickr.com/photos/nvoaden](https://www.flickr.com/photos/nvoaden)). Although not quite endemic to Mexico, as it edges into Guatemala, it still counts as a 'regional endemic', of course...



10

Flowerpiercer *Diglossa baritula*^{RE} and Red-headed Tanager *Piranga erythrocephala*^E. And if that was not enough we truly hit the jackpot with multiple views of a very special and globally Critically Endangered hummer: Short-crested Coquette *Lophornis brachylophus*^E. This finger-size sprite, whose ecology appears to be largely unknown, was staked out by Michael on one of his many scouting trips. If it is only in this area, then with this gem's environment under threat from cultivation and logging one can only fear for its survival.

To the human eye 'de Guerrero' looked rather similar to 'del Sur' albeit a little drier and so scrubbier. Yet for the birds it must be significantly different as again new special creatures kept coming. The lower slopes held Great Swallow-tailed Swift *Panyptila sanctihieronymi*^{RE}, Dusky Hummingbird *Cyanthus sordidus*^E, Grey-breasted Woodpecker *Melanerpes hypopolius*^E, Pileated Flycatcher *Xenotriccus mexicanus*^E, Boucard's Wren *Campylorhynchus jocosus*^E, Blue Mockingbird *Melanotis caerulescens*^E, Grey Silky-flycatcher *Ptiliogonys cinereus*^{RE} and Rusty-



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11 Black-pollled Yellowthroat *Geothlypis speciosa*, Cienega de Lerma, México City, March 2017 (Steven Huggins). This Endangered species is restricted to extensive marshes in just four areas of central Mexico, encompassing the states of Guanajuato, Michoacán and México.

crowned Ground-Sparrow *Melospiza kieneri*^E. On the upper slopes we found Garnet-throated Hummingbird *Lamprolaima rhami*^{RE}, Mountain Trogon *Trogon mexicanus*^{RE}, White-striped Woodcreeper *Lepidocolaptes leucogaster*^E, Slaty Vireo *Vireo brevipennis*^E, Russet-Nightingale-Thrush *Catharus occidentalis*^E, Black Thrush *Turdus infuscatus*^{RE} and Black-headed Siskin *Spinus notatus*^{RE}. However, the stand-out bird without question was a Long-tailed Wood-Partridge *Dendrortyx macroura*^E. Remarkably it was viewed in flight; albeit one that was very low and not for long!

Interior design

Between the Sierra Madre and the Caribbean, the terrain is predominantly a heavily cultivated and populated flat plateau. Thus, at first blush, your instinct is that the birds here will not be commonplace. However, nothing could be further from the truth! Michael had designed five days of intense birding for us along a route that was roughly due north from the city of Chilpancingo to the south of Mexico City and then due east to the edge of the Sierra Madre de Occidental before it drops down to the Caribbean coastal plain. The reason being the high level of endemism within two distinctive geographical features – the Balsas drainage and the Transvolcanic belt. This offered up marshes, lakes, scrub, bunch grass and woods

of pine, oak or fir. For those who desire quantity in their birding this was the place to be.

Here we began recording grebes (Pied-billed *Podilymbus podiceps*, Western *Aechmophorus occidentalis* and Clark's *A. clarkii*), rails (Sora *Porzana Carolina*, Virginia *Rallus limicola* and heard-only Aztec *R. tenuirostris*^E), American Bushtit of the 'Black-eared' type *Psaltriparus minimus melanotis*^{RE}, Pygmy Nuthatch *Sitta pygmaea*, Brown Creeper *Certhia amerciana*, Curve-billed Thrasher *Toxostoma curvirostre*, our first bluebirds (Eastern *Sialia sialis* and Western *S. mexicana*), Grey-collared Becard *Pachyrhamphus major*^{RE}, Black-pollled Yellowthroat *Geothlypis speciosa*^E (Endangered), new Icterids (Yellow-headed Blackbird *Xanthocephalus xanthocephalus*, Scott's Oriole *Icterus parisorum*, Red-winged Blackbird *Agelaius phoeniceus*^E, – here represented by the *gubernator* group, known as 'Mexican Bicoloured Blackbird' – and Brown-headed Cowbird *Molothrus ater*) plus more sparrow-types (Black-chinned *Spizella atrogularis*, Black-chested *Peucaea humeralis*^E, Botteri's *P. botterii* and Striped *Oriturus superciliosus*^E sparrows, with Green-striped *Arremon virenticeps*^E and Rufous-capped *Atlapetes pileatus*^E brushfinches). For those who like their birding spiced with taxonomic controversy, Michael introduced us to the Spotted Towhee *Pipilo maculatus* debate. He drew our attention to a towhee with an olive-back. This is of the race *macronyx*^E. There is surely a cogent case for this being another Mexican endemic species, logically 'Olive-backed Towhee'!

Inevitably a few experiences in the interior stood out. Incredible views of a covey of Banded Quail *Philortyx fasciatus*^E at Laguna Tuxpan near Iguala was one. So too burning the candle at both ends with pre-dawn Balsas Screech-owl *Megascops seductus*^E and Buff-collared Nightjar *Antrostomus ridgwayi* then a post-dusk high-flying Sinaloa Martin *Progne sinaloe*^E above Taxco. Also, on the shortlist was an early-morning, commuter-avoiding dash into the botanical gardens of Mexico City's national university for one regional and two Mexican endemics: Mexican Duck *Anas diazi*^{RE}; Hooded Yellowthroat *Geothlypis nelsoni*^E; and Black-backed Oriole *Icterus abeillei*^E. However, the best day in the interior was surely when we rushed around the Transvolcanic belt, within earshot of the drone of Mexico's capital, seeing Transvolcanic Jay *Aphelocoma ultramarina*^E in a car park, followed by Strickland's Woodpecker *Leuconotopicus stricklandi*^E at a farm collective, Sierra Madre Sparrow *Xenospiza baileyi*^E (Endangered) in grassland and finally (at dusk from



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12 Red Warbler

Cardellina rubra, Barranca Rancho Liebre, Sinaloa, April 2015 (Nigel Voaden; [flickr.com/photos/nvoaden/](https://www.flickr.com/photos/nvoaden/)). A striking montane specialist – and Mexican endemic.

13 Sierra Madre Sparrow *Xenospiza baileyi*, México City, February 2017 (Carl Glometti). We saw this Endangered songbird in the grasslands of the Transvolcanic belt.

14 Rufous-capped Brushfinch Barranca Rancho Liebre, Sinaloa, April 2015 (Nigel Voaden; [flickr.com/photos/nvoaden/](https://www.flickr.com/photos/nvoaden/)). A fairly common endemic of the highlands (900–3,500 m) of northern and central Mexico.

parted the best of friends. We will forever cherish the time we spent with those on the front line of bird conservation in San Miguel Topilejo.

Veracruz farewell

Our last few days combined a gentle descent from the Sierra Madre de Occidental east of Mexico City with a rapid ascent in the rate at which birds were being encountered as we neared the Caribbean plain west of the port of Veracruz. Having experienced the dry heat of the Pacific slope and the relative coolness of the Transvolcanic belt, we were now into humid territory. So, no surprise we found our first antbird (Barred Antshrike *Thamnophilus doliatus*) and a dainty Common Tody-Flycatcher *Todirostrum cinereum*. Although much of this area has been cleared for grazing and some coffee plantations there is still some good habitat. This ranges from foothill woodlands of the Sierra Madre to grassy savannas by the coast.

Typical birds of the woodlands for us near Coatepec were Azure-crowned Hummingbird

a rooftop bar) scanning the skies for White-naped Swift *Streptoprocne semicollaris*^E.

The Sierra Madre Sparrow excursion involved our most humbling experience of the trip. As we walked a track a ‘brigade’ approached the group. This was no military unit but ‘Brigado de Moneterio’, a crack squad of local people devoted to saving the sparrow. After David explained in Spanish what we were up to and the mission of the NBC, stern looks switched to broad smiles. Obligatory photos with the brigade followed as they related their work with justifiable pride. We



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15 Townsend's Warbler *Setophaga townsendi*, Volcan de Fuego, Jalisco, April 2015 (Nigel Voaden; [flickr.com/photos/nvoaden/](https://www.flickr.com/photos/nvoaden/)). Breeds in western North America, wintering south through Mexico into Panama.

16 Red-headed Tanager *Piranga erythrocephala*, Reserva Chara Pinta, Sinaloa, April 2015 (Nigel Voaden; [flickr.com/photos/nvoaden/](https://www.flickr.com/photos/nvoaden/)). Endemic to the mountains of western Mexico.

Amazilia cyanocephala^{RE}, Gartered Trogon *Trogon caligatus*, Blue-capped Motmot *Momotus coeruleiceps*^E, Bronze-winged Woodpecker *Colaptes aeruginosus*^E, White-naped Brushfinch *Atlapetes albinucha* and Rusty Sparrow *Aimophila rufescens*^{RE}. As for the savanna, we welcomed seeing Double-striped Thick-knee *Burhinus bistriatus*, Plain-breasted Ground Dove *Columbina minuta*, Aplomado Falcon *Falco femoralis*, Rufous-naped Wren *Campylorhynchus rufinucha*^E, and both Altamira *Icterus gularis* and Ochre *I. fuertesi*^E orioles. You will have spotted that this includes yet more endemic species but also our run of interesting *subspecies* continued with (the Near Threatened) Northern Bobwhite *Colinus virginianus pectoralis*^{RE} (this version having cinnamon-rufous underparts and a broad black chestband), Squirrel Cuckoo *Piaya cayana thermophila* (darker above than the *mexicana* on the Pacific slope), Warbling Vireo *Vireo gilvus gilvus*, Tropical Parula *Setophaga pitiayumi nigrilora*^{RE}, Grey-barred Wren *Campylorhynchus megalopterus nelsoni*^E and Common Bush Tanager *Chlorospingus flavopectus ophthalmicus*^{RE}.

The final leg of our trip had been as distinctive as the previous three with several particularly special moments. There was our hunt for one more New World Quail (Odontophoridae). After some inspired on-the-spot planning by Michael we saw (albeit with the naked eye!) Bearded Wood-Partridge *Dendrortyx barbatus*^E (Vulnerable). Understandably, alongside our earlier viewing of Long-tailed Partridge, for some this was the highlight of the trip. And yet one further encounter ranked almost as high. Our final location was Alvarado wetlands close to Veracruz airport and our departure point for

home. Here as we surveyed the swaying grasses the head and neck of a Pinnated Bittern *Botaurus pinnatus* suddenly appeared. Magic! A great way to complete what is surely one of the finest birding routes in North America.

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This fundraiser would not have been possible but for two people: David Salas of Fronteras de Ecoturismo and Michael Carmody of Legacy Tours. David kept the group on the straight and narrow. As for Michael, as John Cleese of *Monty Python* fame might have said, the trip was 'designed, written and performed' by Michael. He is truly something completely different. Neither the sums NBC raised nor the joy of the trip would have been possible without his leadership, peerless knowledge of Mexico's avifauna, attention to every detail and sandwich-making skills.

Thanks also to: William and staff at Manzanillo Bay for birds and lunch; Laurel for showing us around the wonderful El Refugio de Potosi and allowing us to use her viewing tower; and members of the Brigado de Moniterio (David Aguilar Bravo, Jacinto Martínez Pérez, Cecilia Flores Arena and Ana Karen Manzaneros Flores) for their sterling work in bird conservation. Many thanks to all 12 participants for assisting the NBC in raising so much for the Club's conservation efforts and especially my six stoic companions on the first trip: Becky, Bill, Jim, Mark, Michael G. and Stephen. Finally, huge thanks to Mark Hoffman for his excellent record-keeping upon which I have drawn relentlessly for this article and to Carl Giometti, Steven Huggins, Aidan Kelly, Bill Moorhead and Nigel Voaden ([flickr.com/photos/nvoaden/](https://www.flickr.com/photos/nvoaden/)) for use of their excellent photos.

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The 2018 IUCN Red List in the Neotropics

James Lowen, Hannah Wheatley, Claudia Hermes, Ian Burfield and David Wege

Neotropical Birding 21 featured a summary of the key implications for the Neotropics of the 2016 IUCN Red List for birds. This article briefs readers on the main changes from the 2018 update.

As part of its role as the IUCN Red List Authority for birds, BirdLife International is responsible for assessing the global conservation status of each of the world's 11,000 or so bird species, allocating each to a category ranging from Least Concern to Extinct. The latest update was published in November 2018 (BirdLife International 2018). Although much more modest in reach than the comprehensive update carried out in 2016, whose Neotropical dimension was discussed in Symes *et al.* (2017), the 2018 revamp contains a suite of interesting changes for species occurring in the Neotropical Bird Club region that are worth drawing to readers' collective attention.

BirdLife's Red List team updated the information available for roughly 2,300 species worldwide. Globally, this resulted in changes to the categorisation of 89 species; 58 species were 'uplisted' to a higher category of threat, whilst roughly half that number – 31 species – were 'downlisted'. In the Neotropics, 13 species were uplisted (Fig. 2) and slightly more – 18 – were downlisted (Fig. 5). Now let's take a closer look at the individual changes, largely using information made available on BirdLife's 'Globally Threatened Bird Forums' (globally-threatened-bird-forums.birdlife.org). Is the picture quite as rosy as the headline figures suggest?



1 Red-fronted Macaw *Ara rubrogenys*, Omereque, Cochabamba, Bolivia, November 2013 (Paul B. Jones; [flickr.com/photos/paulbjones/](https://www.flickr.com/photos/paulbjones/)). One of two Neotropical species sadly uplisted from Endangered to Critically Endangered.

2 Neotropical species 'uplisted' to a higher category of threat in the 2018 IUCN Red List update

		2017 IUCN Red List Category	2018 IUCN Red List Category
Dwarf Tinamou	<i>Taoniscus nanus</i>	VU	EN
Black Swift	<i>Cypseloides niger</i>	LC	VU
Chimney Swift	<i>Chaetura pelagica</i>	NT	VU
Tapajos Hermit	<i>Phaethornis aethopygus</i>	NT	VU
White-tailed Starfrontlet	<i>Coeligena phalerata</i>	LC	NT
Rufous Hummingbird	<i>Selasphorus rufus</i>	LC	NT
Chaco Owl	<i>Strix chacoensis</i>	LC	NT
Red-fronted Macaw	<i>Ara rubrogenys</i>	EN	CR
Brasilia Tapaculo	<i>Scytalopus novacapitalis</i>	NT	EN
Brown-rumped Tapaculo	<i>Scytalopus latebricola</i>	LC	NT
Bahama Nuthatch	<i>Sitta insularis</i>	EN	CR
Eastern Meadowlark	<i>Sturnella magna</i>	LC	NT
Blackpoll Warbler	<i>Setophaga striata</i>	LC	NT

Species uplisted to Near Threatened in 2018 included: **3** Chaco Owl *Strix chacoensis*, Santa Teresita de Mazan, La Rioja, Argentina, February 2013 (Silvia Vitale) and **4** White-tailed Starfrontlet *Coeligena phalerata*, El Dorado, Santa Marta, Colombia, March 2015 (José Castaño; ✉ josefc11@gmail.com).

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Uplistings

Of the 13 uplisted Neotropical species (or, at least, species with a Neotropical dimension to their range), seven were previously considered Least Concern so are new arrivals to the threatened or Near Threatened categories of the Red List. Six are classified as Near Threatened for the first time, of which three were genuine changes, meaning that they need careful watching in order to detect any deterioration towards Vulnerable or higher threat category. These include two birds, familiar to North American readers, whose wintering ranges encompass parts of the northern Neotropics: **Rufous Hummingbird** *Selasphorus rufus* and **Blackpoll Warbler** *Setophaga striata*. Both have undergone a marked decline, which might have been caused, in part, by climate change. Another well-known North American species, but which also breeds in Central and South America, is **Eastern Meadowlark** *Sturnella magna*. Rosenberg *et al.* (2016) put its global population reduction between 1970 and 2014 at 77%. Combined with other data, this has prompted its listing as Near Threatened.

The seventh species bumped up from Least Concern – **Black Swift** *Cypseloides niger* – is now considered Vulnerable. This addition to the unfortunate ranks of globally threatened birds breeds widely throughout western North America south to Costa Rica, with additional populations in the West Indies. Overall, BirdLife estimates that its global population has reduced by 45% over the past three generations (calculated as being 24 years), which warrants listing as Vulnerable. Reasons for the decline are unclear, although climate change and increased pesticide use, which affects its insect prey, have been suggested as key threats (Rosenberg *et al.* 2016, Chantler *et al.* 2018).

Six species that were already considered globally threatened have witnessed their Red List category worsen in the 2018 update. With only historical records from Argentina and Paraguay, **Dwarf Tinamou** *Taoniscus nanus* is now certain to persist only in Brazil. Here, evidence suggests an 'Area of Occupancy' of under 500 km² (which, moreover, is declining in both extent and habitat quality) and a highly fragmented population – justification for elevating the species from Vulnerable to Endangered.

Chimney Swift *Chaetura pelagica* joins its fellow aerial insectivore, Black Swift, as Vulnerable. Breeding in North America, this species migrates through Central America to winter in northwestern South America. In each

of two assessments (Rosenberg *et al.* 2016, Sauer *et al.* 2017), the rate of decline in breeding populations exceeds the minimum threshold for listing as Vulnerable (30% over three generations). The finger points to the ongoing loss of potential nesting sites, notably chimneys and old-growth trees, as the main cause.

Tapajos Hermit *Phaethornis aethopygus* is endemic to Brazil, where it is known only from the vicinity of the Teles Pires, Tapajós and Xingu rivers, south of the River Amazon (Piacentini *et al.* 2009). Habitat loss within the species's range is predicted to be about 25% in the near future, and the species's population is thought likely to decline by at least 30% in the next 13 years (three generations), which merits its uplisting from Near Threatened to Vulnerable.

Another Brazilian endemic, as its name suggests, is **Brasilia Tapaculo** *Scytalopus novacapitalis*. Worryingly, this species has leapt two categories of threat – from Near Threatened to Endangered. It occurs in swampy gallery forest and dense streamside vegetation in Goiás, Distrito Federal and west Minas Gerais. The species's 'Area of Occupancy' is estimated to be a tiny and severely fragmented 72 km². Even this residual habitat is thought to be declining in both extent and quality owing to pollution, water extraction, trampling by livestock and mining.

Frightening though the tapaculo's double-uplisting is, without doubt the scariest changes in status are those of two species elevated from Endangered to Critically Endangered. Both now lie right in the firing line of global extinction. **Red-fronted Macaw** *Ara rubrogenys* is endemic to Bolivia, being found only in a small area of the eastern Andes. It is thought to have originally inhabited inter-Andean dry forest, but centuries of human activity have comprehensively removed or degraded this habitat. Recent surveys (Tella *et al.* 2013) estimated the total breeding population – across 30-odd sites – to be c.67–136 pairs. In addition, 33 non-breeding pairs and 535 non-breeding individuals were counted. Commenting on the species's Globally Threatened Bird Forums discussion page, José Tella (*in litt.* 2017) noted that there was negligible gene flow between colonies, despite them being separated by just 10–60 km. Each site thus effectively represents a separate subpopulation, meaning that no subpopulation would contain >50 mature individuals. This qualifies the species as Critically Endangered.

The situation of **Bahama Nuthatch** *Sitta insularis* is even more perilous. Symes *et al.* (2017) covered this recent split from Brown-headed Nuthatch *Sitta pusilla*. Habitat destruction and

5 Neotropical species 'downlisted' to a lower category of threat in the 2018 IUCN Red List update

		2017 IUCN Red List Category	2018 IUCN Red List Category
Black Guan	<i>Chamaepetes unicolor</i>	NT	LC
Bearded Guan	<i>Penelope barbata</i>	VU	NT
White-winged Guan	<i>Penelope albipennis</i>	CR	EN
Gorgeted Wood-Quail	<i>Odontophorus strophium</i>	EN	VU
Hyacinth Visorbearer	<i>Augastes scutatus</i>	NT	LC
Rusty-flanked Crane	<i>Laterallus levraudi</i>	EN	VU
Hispaniolan Trogon	<i>Temnotrogon roseigaster</i>	NT	LC
Kaempfer's Woodpecker	<i>Celeus obrieni</i>	EN	VU
Peruvian Plantcutter	<i>Phytotoma raimondii</i>	EN	VU
Rufous Flycatcher	<i>Myiarchus semirufus</i>	EN	VU
Bell's Vireo	<i>Vireo bellii</i>	NT	LC
Palm Crow	<i>Corvus palmarum</i>	NT	LC
Munchique Wood-Wren	<i>Henicorhina negreti</i>	CR	VU
La Selle Thrush	<i>Turdus swalesi</i>	EN	VU
Tanager Finch	<i>Oreothraupis arremonops</i>	VU	LC
Zapata Sparrow	<i>Torreornis inexpectata</i>	EN	VU
Painted Bunting	<i>Passerina ciris</i>	NT	LC
Cinereous Warbling-Finch	<i>Microspingus cinereus</i>	VU	LC

EDITOR'S NOTE: TAXONOMY

This article focuses on the IUCN Red List for birds, which uses the taxonomy followed by BirdLife International (del Hoyo & Collar 2014, 2016). This does not imply any change to the taxonomic authorities followed by Neotropical Bird Club publications, which remain the South American Classification Committee and the American Ornithological Society.

6 Cinereous Warbling-Finch *Microspingus cinereus*, Altiplano Leste, Brasilia, Brazil, March 2016 (Rodrigo Conte; tinyurl.com/rodrigo-conte). This species has been 'double-downlisted' from Vulnerable to Least Concern after researchers discovered that it not only persists in degraded habitats, but actually favours them.

degradation, fires, hurricane damage and possibly invasive species were judged to threaten the Bahamas' new endemic species, meaning that in 2016 it joined the Red List as Endangered. In September 2016, Grand Bahama was hit by Category five Hurricane Matthew, which severely damaged the nuthatch's forest habitat (Bahamas National Trust 2016). Subsequent surveys failed to find the species, leading to fears that the hurricane had pushed it to extinction. Fortunately, in May 2018 fieldworkers on two independent surveys confirmed that the nuthatch remained extant (see tinyurl.com/b-nuthatch). Although heartening, they only detected a couple of birds, and it seems highly unlikely that the population exceeds 50 individuals, which qualifies the species as Critically Endangered.

Downlistings

If downlistings are to be celebrated (Mallon & Jackson 2017), then tears of joy should be shed when a species leaves the threatened categories of the Red List entirely, and is now categorised as Least Concern. This was the case for eight





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Species downlisted following a refined application of the IUCN Red List Criteria when estimating 'Extent of Occurrence' include: **7** Hyacinth Visorbearer *Augastes scutatus*, Conceição do Mato Dentro, Minas Gerais, Brazil, December 2015 (Jarbas Mattos; [flickr.com/photos/jarbas mattos/](https://www.flickr.com/photos/jarbas mattos/)); **8** Munchique Wood-Wren *Henicorhina negreti*, Montezuma, Risaralda, Colombia, November 2018 (Claudio Vidal/Far South Expeditions); and **9** Tanager Finch *Oreothraupis arremonops*, Montezuma, Risaralda, Colombia, November 2018 (James Lowen/[jameslowen.com](https://www.jameslowen.com)).



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Neotropical species in 2018. Of the ten remaining downlisted species, one is now Endangered, eight Vulnerable and one Near Threatened.

Look closer and things are not quite as good as they seem, however. For a number of these downlistings, the ‘good news’ stems from a clarification and better appreciation of how the relevant IUCN Red List Criteria should be applied, specifically the estimation of the ‘Extent of Occurrence’ of a species (see <https://tinyurl.com/IUCN-polygon>). This effectively measures the spatial spread of areas currently known to be occupied by a species. Areas close together are likely to experience more similar environmental conditions, processes and threats – which could therefore lead to lower extinction risk for species that are spread over a large area compared to those spread over a small area.

It is this refinement in approach that led to the downlisting of 12 of the 18 species in 2018. These were: **Black Guan** *Chamaepetes unicolor*, **Bearded Guan** *Penelope barbata*, **Gorgeted Wood-Quail** *Odontophorus strophium*, **Hyacinth Visorbearer** *Augastes scutatus*, **Hispaniolan Trogon** *Temnotrogon roseigaster*, **Peruvian Plantcutter** *Phytotoma raimondii* (and this in the knowledge of concerns raised in, e.g., Flanagan 2018), **Rufous Flycatcher** *Myiarchus semirufus*, **Palm Crow** *Corvus palmarum*, **Munchique Wood-Wren** *Henicorhina negreti*, **La Selle Thrush** *Turdus swalesi*, **Tanager Finch** *Oreothraupis arremonops* and **Zapata Sparrow** *Torreornis inexpectata*.

A close look at the remaining six downlistings reveals that *all* were due to improved data on (higher) population and/or (wider) distribution, leading to the assessment that the species involved are not as threatened as previously thought. Sadly, not a single Neotropical downlisting in 2019 is thus due to a genuine improvement in conservation status.

A Venezuelan endemic, **Rusty-flanked Crane** *Laterallus levraudi*, has been moved from Endangered to Vulnerable because it is now known from a much larger and more contiguous distribution than previously supposed (Sharpe & Ascanio 2015); moreover, deforestation may have enabled the crane to expand its range into newly created open areas. Nevertheless, its wetland habitat is threatened by drainage and other factors, and neither of the two known subpopulations are thought to exceed 1,000 mature individuals (C. J. Sharpe *in litt.* 2017) – so the species still qualifies as Vulnerable.

Kaempfer’s Woodpecker *Celeus obrieni* was rediscovered in 2006 after 80 years without a record. It has now been recorded at several

widely distributed sites across five states in northeast and central Brazil, increasing its (admittedly discontinuous) ‘Extent of Occurrence’ to c.806,000 km². This argued against 95–100% of mature individuals being confined to a single subpopulation, which was how the previous categorisation of Endangered was justified. With this criterion no longer met, this attractive woodpecker was downlisted to Vulnerable.

Bell’s Vireo *Vireo bellii* breeds in northern Mexico and central USA and winters south through Central America. Recent research suggests an increasing breeding population in North America, leading to its downlisting from Near Threatened to Least Concern. The same change has been accorded to another migrant passerine, **Painted Bunting** *Passerina ciris*, which overwinters in Mexico south through Central America and in parts of the Caribbean. The population decline in this colourful bird is now thought to be somewhere in the region of 2–3% over three generations, which is not sufficient to trigger any of the (near) threatened categories.

Another downlisting due to better knowledge of the species’s status is that of **Cinereous Warbling-Finch** *Microspingus cinereus*. Formerly listed as Vulnerable, the species is endemic to central-southern Brazil. Recent information suggests that not only does it persist in modified habitats such as degraded cerrado and old pastures, but that it actually favours them. As such, rather than declining, it even appears to be extending its range in eastern Minas Gerais state at least. Accordingly it has been ‘double-downlisted’ to Least Concern.

Last but certainly not least, **White-winged Guan** *Penelope albipennis* has been downlisted from Critically Endangered to Endangered. Hidden among small tracts of woodland in northwest Peru, the guan’s population was formerly suspected to be declining, but evidence now shows that it has been stable for at least 25 years. Some 300 individuals were estimated to exist in 2015 (Angulo & Riva 2015). Although threats such as hunting and habitat loss remain, their impact is lower following awareness campaigns. White-winged Guan is a species close to the Neotropical Bird Club’s metaphorical heart: the Club has recently funded two conservation projects to help it (pages 76–77).

The future

There will be another Red List update in 2019. By the time you read this, proposals for changes to current categorisations

should already be published on BirdLife's Globally Threatened Bird Forums (globally-threatened-bird-forums.birdlife.org, should you need a reminder of where to visit).

Of relevance to this year's update, several additional Neotropical species are subject to the technical refinement relating to the estimation of their 'Extent of Occurrence' (tinyurl.com/EOO-BirdLife) and have been proposed for recategorisation. These are: **White-winged Nightjar** *Eleothreptus candicans*, **Black-breasted Puffleg** *Eriocnemis nigrivestis*, **Yellow-shouldered Amazon** *Amazona barbadensis*, **Slaty Becard** *Pachyramphus spodiurus*, **Foothill Elaenia** *Myiopagis olallai*, **Choco Vireo** *Vireo masteri*, **Multicoloured Tanager** *Chlorochrysa nitidissima* and **Azure-rumped Tanager** *Tangara cabanisi*. If you have useful information or opinions to contribute on these or other species, please do so.

The 2019 update will be followed, in 2020, by a full reassessment of the status of all the world's birds – four years on from the 2016 Red List update on which we reported in *Neotropical Birding* 21. That might just prompt another article in the pages of this magazine...

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The Grey-bellied Comet – threatened enigma of the Peruvian Andes

Jeremy Flanagan

Grey-bellied Comet *Taphrolesbia griseiventris* occurs only in the Andes of northern Peru, and is considered globally Endangered. Little is known about this extremely scarce bird, but best estimates put its population at around a thousand individuals. Recent fires have seriously damaged the Comet's only reliable site, on the Río Chonta, which a local and international campaign is now seeking to restore.

One of Peru's rarest hummingbirds, Grey-bellied Comet *Taphrolesbia griseiventris* remains, for the most part, poorly documented. When *Threatened Birds of the Americas* (Collar *et al.* 1992) was published, knowledge of the bird consisted of a few specimens collected from the 1870s–1920s from the regions of Cajamarca region (at Paucal, Cajamarca city and Cajabamba) and Huánuco (at Cullcui) plus a single sight record by Ted Parker III in 1975 between the towns of Huánuco and La Unión. Even as early as the end of the 19th century, the

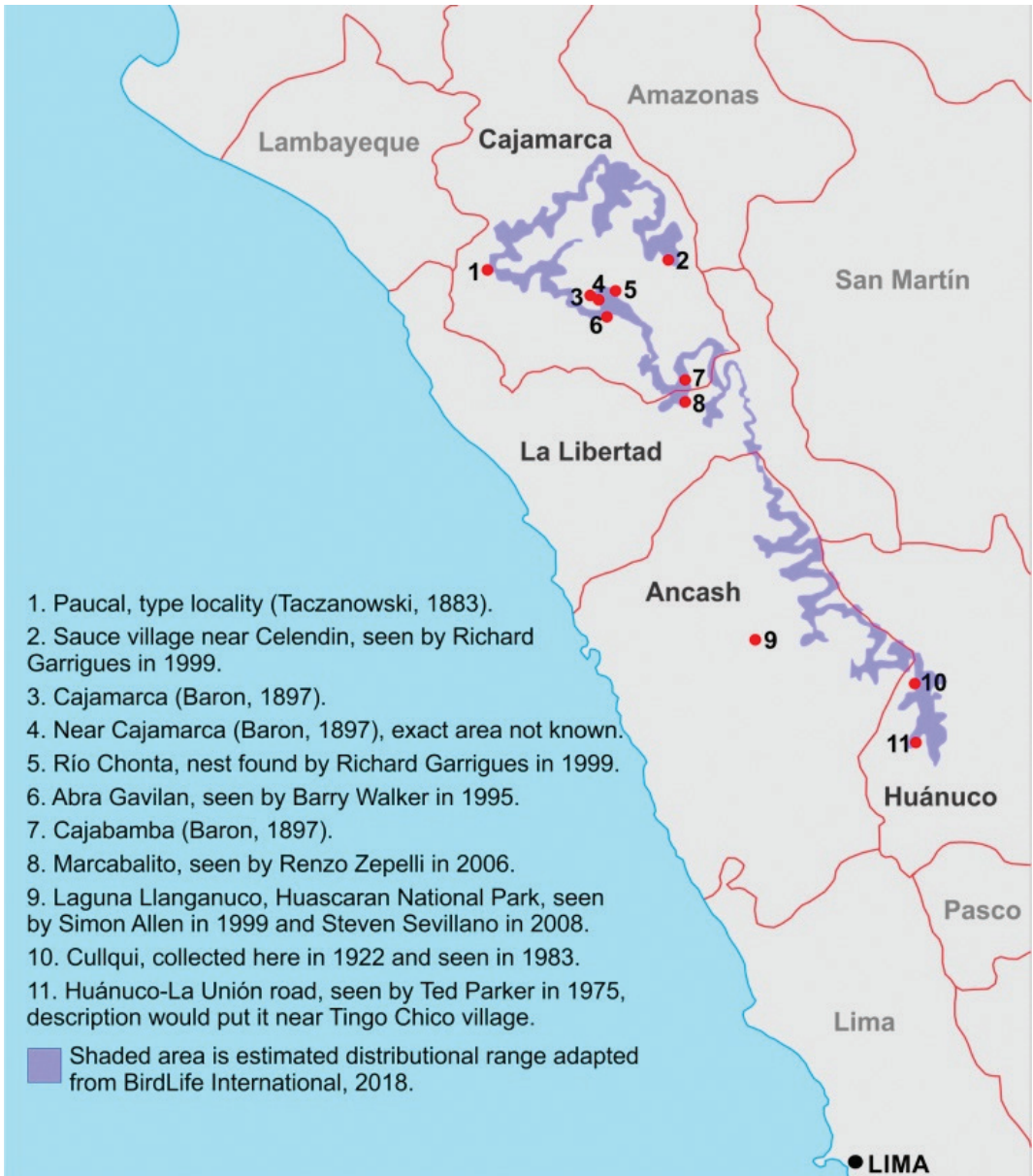
species was considered uncommon and one of Peru's rarer hummingbirds in the region by Oscar Baron (1897), a naturalist who spent considerable time travelling and collecting hummingbirds in the north of the country.

Recent observations

Over time, more sightings emerged. The species was recorded again near Cullcui in 1983 (BirdLife International 2018), although it has not been seen there subsequently. In February 1995, Barry Walker saw two adults below the El Gavilán

1 Male Grey-bellied Comet
Taphrolesbia griseiventris,
Río Chonta, Cajamarca,
Peru, September 2018
(Nick Athanas/
Tropical Birding).





2 Distribution of Grey-bellied Comet *Taphrolesbia griseiventris*, with named localities (Jeremy Flanagan).

pass on the road from Cajamarca city to the coast. Simon Allen saw the species in July 1999 near Laguna Llanganuco in Parque Nacional Huascarán, and subsequently Steven Sevillano sighted the species in 2008 (eBird checklist S4315921). The year 1999 saw Richard Garrigues discover a nesting female in the lower Río Chonta valley c.10 km northeast of Cajamarca city in February (where Jonas Nilsson also saw the species in June) plus another female above Sauce village, near Celendin (Garrigues 2001). The species was

also sighted by Renzo Zepelli near Marcabalito, La Libertad Region, in 2006 (BirdLife International, 2018). Such records started to indicate that the Comet was distributed more widely – albeit still very patchily – than previously thought.

Unpicking the enigma

It was Richard Garrigues’s publication (Garrigues 2001) that sparked interest in Río Chonta as a potential area for Grey-bellied Comet conservation.



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3 Male Grey-bellied Comet *Taphrolesia griseiventris*, Río Chonta, Cajamarca, Peru, September 2018 (Nick Athanas/Tropical Birding).

4–5 Male Grey-bellied Comet *Taphrolesia griseiventris*, Río Chonta, Cajamarca, Peru, May 2018 (**4** Wilson Díaz Miranda/Green Tours; **5** Carlos Soto).

On the recommendation of Mikko Pyhälä, former Finnish ambassador to Peru, I was invited to Cajamarca in 2000 by Hotel Laguna Seca, in Baños del Inca, to conduct bird surveys. In November, I found Comets at different spots along the Río Chonta. With the continued support of Hotel Laguna Seca, I conducted further studies over the next two years. This included field trips with Rob Williams and Alfredo Begazo in February 2001 during which we found three nests and identified ten food plants. In September 2002 I accompanied a Field Guides Inc tour, led by Rose Ann Rowlett and Richard Webster, to the best spot on the Río Chonta.

And thus the Río Chonta quite quickly became established as *the* spot to see the Comet. This area has provided confirmed records of the species regularly over the last 20 years, which is good news. The troubling bit is that this is the only 'guaranteed' site for a globally threatened species.

Despite searches, the Comet has not been recorded again at Parker's site (BirdLife International 2018). Nor did Rob Williams, Alfredo Begazo and I find it during 2001 surveys at a host of other sites, including El Gavilán pass, Cumbemayo, Namora, La Encañada, Laguna San Nicholas, and the upper Río Chonta as far as Combayo. No new sites have been found in Cajamarca, despite formal fieldwork and birding visits over the last decade or so by experienced Cajamarca birders such as Manuel Roncal, Carlos Soto and brothers Carlos and Wilson Díaz. In November 2018, Manuel Roncal, a professor at Cajamarca National University, and university students searched in vain for the Comet around Cajabamba.

Although data on eBird (ebird.org) suggest that the Comet has been recorded at other sites, I personally consider the information to be dubious for several reasons. One example relates to single observations by individuals on brief visits (e.g. eBird checklists S47530292, S47412158 and S24286847). Some reports cause confusion because they combine bird lists from several sites, then assign this combined catalogue to one site (e.g. the Comet figures on lists for Laguna San Nicolas (eBird S49223874), Municipalidad Choten (eBird S28585358), Cajamarca region (eBird S33074671) and departamento Cajamarca (eBird S36262793). Other records indicate that the observer was traveling and thus do not pinpoint location (eBird S36911054 and S38483426). Finally, some observers have apparently inaccurately located their observations on a map (e.g. eBird S31808714, S27040729 and S38483426). Regretfully, in the case of the Comet,

eBird checklists appear to generate considerable frustration rather than assist research.

Overall, a cautious list of known historical sites for the Comet would comprise 11 locations (Fig. 2). Taken together, these data would seem to underline the hypothesis that Grey-bellied Comet is an extremely rare and localised species and also to highlight that the Río Chonta valley is presently the critical site for the species.

Río Chonta

The Río Chonta runs through a narrow, steep valley and is easily accessed from Cajamarca along the road going to Combayo and beyond. From the lower valley (near the bridge from Ventillas de Otuzco (▲ -7.116290°, -78.443515°) and Richard Garrigues' original site) heading upriver, the Comet has been seen at different spots along a 7 km stretch, up to and around a very narrow canyon in an area known as Sangal (▲ -7.083705°, -78.400203°). To download a Google Earth file (.kmz) that I have prepared, please visit tinyurl.com/chonta2018.

Along the Río Chonta, Grey-bellied Comet inhabits open and generally quite dry scrub with a good diversity of plants. The hummingbird appears restricted to roadside plants and small side valleys with adequate vegetation. In 2002, botanical surveys were conducted along the valley at six spots where there is regular Comet activity (including three known nesting sites). This identified c.60 species of shrub, bush, tree and bromeliad. Two native bushes *Tecoma sambucifolia* and *Delostoma integrifolium* are common food sources for the Comet. Photos have shown the Comet accessing *Delostoma* nectar via existing flowerpiercer *Diglossa* holes.

The habitat at Río Chonta, however, is increasingly under pressure from grazing and burning. Farmers in the region have long converted most reasonably flat land into pasture or cropland. They also apply a practice that is common throughout the Andes, namely burning the scrub every year to stimulate regrowth of browsable vegetation and, intriguingly, in the belief that this activity will bring rains. Highly detrimental to local flora and fauna, such traditional activities will have to be controlled if species such as the Comet are to be protected.

Disaster strikes

In early September 2018 Manuel Roncal alerted Peru's birding community to a fire that was burning out of control on several slopes in the upper Río Chonta valley. Worse still, the fire



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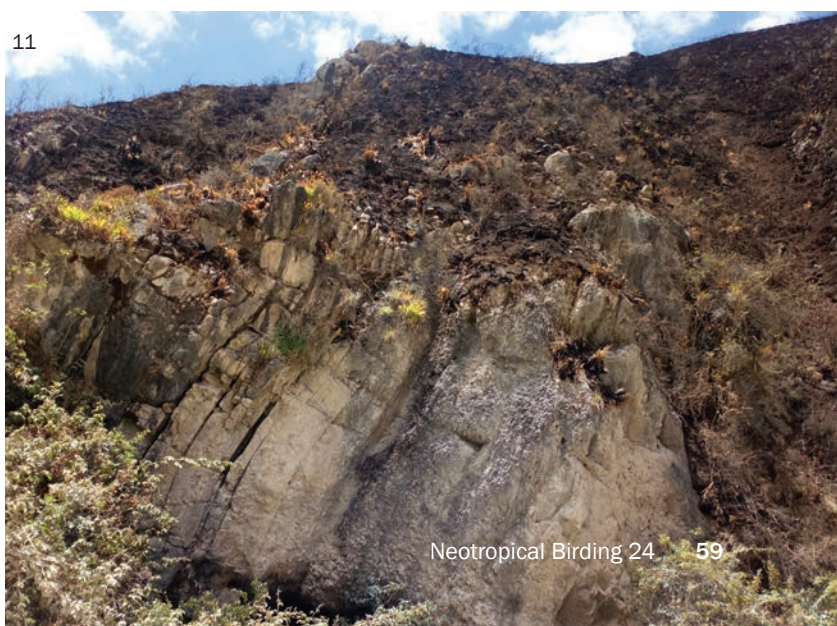
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6 The narrow Sangal canyon along the Río Chonta (Cajamarca, Peru, July 2001; Jeremy Flanagan), with healthy vegetation.

7 The area a few steps north of the Sangal canyon (Río Chonta, Cajamarca, Peru, July 2001; Jeremy Flanagan), in an area that would be flooded by a proposed reservoir (page 61).

8 Nest of Grey-bellied Comet *Taphrolesia griseiventris*, Río Chonta, Cajamarca, Peru, July 2001 (Jeremy Flanagan).

9 Nest site up a side ravine at Río Chonta, Cajamarca, Peru, July 2001 (Jeremy Flanagan); nest is hidden by overhanging leaves and roots

10–11 Río Chonta, Cajamarca, Peru (Jeremy Flanagan). Two images of the 2001 nest site at Río Chonta, Cajamarca, Peru (Jeremy Flanagan) – **10** taken in July 2001 and **11** in September 2018 – illustrate the extent to which natural vegetation has been removed.

>> GLOBALLY THREATENED BIRD GREY-BELLIED COMET



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12–17 Native vegetation burnt by fire at the best known site for Grey-bellied Comet *Taphrolesbia griseiventris*: Río Chonta, Cajamarca, Peru, September 2018 (Manuel Roncal-Rabanal).

was at precisely one of the best spots to see the Comet, where it is known to have nested twice. Manuel had gone there that day to film a television interview on the Comet and birdwatching in Cajamarca but was confronted by an entirely different story. The fire had been started by a local farmer to clear a patch of land, but quickly spread out of control over the steep valley. In total, some 130 hectares of an already scarce habitat was burnt. It was time to act, and quickly too.

Manuel raised the alarm by calling Carlos Díaz of Green Tours, who in turn spread the news to the conservation community. An initial response was

organized by ECOAN (Asociación Ecosistemas Andinos), Peru's leading bird-conservation organisation, with funding swiftly provided by the American Bird Conservancy (ABC). This brought together bird conservationists (including myself), journalists, local authorities and other interested parties for four days in Cajamarca in late September, with the purpose of designing a sustainable conservation plan for the Chonta valley. It was shocking to see at first-hand the damage caused by the fire, especially around the two spots where I had previously watched the Comet rear young. Seeing the Comet against a

backdrop of charred mountainside consolidated participants' shared concern that something needed to be done to conserve the Chonta valley and its unique birdlife.

A rescue plan?

At the time of writing (early December 2018) solid progress has been made. In November, ECOAN president Constantino (Tino) Auca Chutas visited ABC and secured new funding for long-term actions. This will fund an environmental education programme with the local school and a community plant nursery that has capacity to grow 50,000 plants, producing native species on which the Comet can feed and fruit trees to provide extra income for farmers. Cajamarca biologist Carlos Soto has been hired by ECOAN to oversee the nursery, which will also employ members of the local community. Ideally the area needs protecting as a reserve, which ABC and ECOAN are considering. This will call for some creative thinking: a single reserve is probably not feasible due to remnant native vegetation comprising small, highly fragmented patches mixed with agricultural land.

On my visit in early December 2018, I walked the whole 7 km up and down the valley, collecting seeds of native plants. I was struck by the highly degraded nature of the remaining patches of native vegetation. Garnering support from local communities and restoring this valley is not going to be easy. Another consideration is the proposed construction of a reservoir in the upper valley, which will essentially close off the Sangal canyon. How this will affect conservation activities and whether remedial actions can be costed into the reservoir budget are both currently unknown.

Much work lies ahead, in the Chonta valley and beyond. Further searches for Grey-bellied Comet are needed to help clarify its distribution and conservation status which is a prerequisite for potentially protecting additional sites. Conservation work in the Río Chonta valley will also benefit other sought-after species of interest to birders such as Black Metaltail *Metallura phoebe*, Rusty-crowned Tit-Spintail *Leptasthenura*

pileata, Plain-tailed Warbling-Finch *Microspingus alticola* (Endangered), Rufous-breasted Warbling-Finch *Poospiza rubecula* (Endangered) and Rufous-eared Brush-Finch *Atlapetes rufigenis* (Near Threatened). The determination of those who are striving to restore the Río Chonta valley and its Grey-bellied Comets deserves widespread recognition: their efforts inspire hope that the area will continue to be a key site for these wonderful hummingbirds – and all birders who travel to see them.

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Neotropical Notebook

James Lowen

This article collates noteworthy records from recent literature and social media plus the occasional unpublished observation. Highlights include several potential additions to the South American avifauna and numerous new country records. Unless otherwise stated, inclusion of records here does not imply acceptance by the relevant records committee.

Argentina

Apparently the first record for South America of **Australasian Shoveler** *Spatula rhynchotis* (indeed, the first away from Australasia) comprises a male specimen discovered at the Museu Nacional, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (Crozariol & Nacinovic, 2017). It was reportedly collected in Entre Ríos province, Argentina, prior to 1897. The poorly known **Dot-winged Crake** *Porzana spiloptera* is patchily distributed in the lowlands of southern South America. Zarco *et al.* (2017) report a new population at a high-elevation site in the central Andes (c.1,900 m in the Upsallata Valley, Mendoza) during January–February 2013 (Fig. 1). The first records of **Striped Owl** *Asio clamator* for north Patagonia (provinces Neuquén and Río Negro) were documented in 2017–18. They extend the known range southwest by 705 km (Bianchini 2018). Sarquis *et al.* (2017) document two species new for Entre Ríos province: **Red Knot** *Calidris canutus* (based on photographs from 1991!) and **Surucua Trogon** *Trogon surrucura* (a range extension of 390 km from Santa Fé. Newly documented for Córdoba province is **Rufous-sided Crake** *Laterallus melanophaius* (Cejas *et al.* 2018). Pagano *et al.* (2017) detail the

first **Swallow-tailed Kites** *Elanoides forficatus* for Córdoba and Santiago del Estero provinces.

New for Buenos Aires province – and a range extension south of 270 km – is **Yellow-headed Vulture** *Cathartes burrovianus* (Colombo *et al.* 2018).



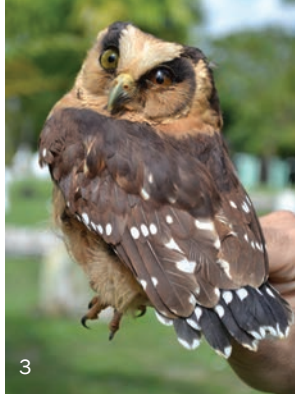
1 Dot-winged Crake, Upsallata Valley, Mendoza, Argentina, January 2013 (Agustín Zarco/ECA-IADIZA-CONICET).

Brazil

Satellite telemetry has revealed a new species for Brazil and the Americas: a juvenile **Ascension Frigatebird** *Fregata aquila* was tracked into Brazilian waters in June–July 2014 (Williams *et al.* 2017). Another species new for Brazil and the Americas was an immature **Allen's Gallinule** *Porphyrio alleni* at Fernando de Noronha, Pernambuco, on 20 February 2018, photographed by Leopoldo Pivovar Plotecya (WikiAves WA2897831). The first **Squacco Heron** *Ardeola ralloides* for mainland South America was a bird photographed at Parque do Cocó, Fortaleza, Ceará, on 18 March 2018 (Macaulay Library record ML90340181, *per A. C. Lees in litt.*); this Old World species may now be established on Fernando do Noronha. Geolocator data for a female **Caribbean Martin** *Progne dominicensis* suggest that the species's wintering grounds include western Bahia, Brazil (Perlut *et al.* 2017). This would seem to represent the first confirmed record for Brazil. There were four other Brazilian firsts. A first calendar-year male **Black-throated Green Warbler** *Setophaga virens* was photographed at Gameleira do Dida, Campo Formoso, Bahia, on 2 September 2016 (Deconto & Villegas Vallejos 2017). A female **Red-necked Phalarope** *Phalaropus lobatus* was photographed at Laguna de Araruama, Praia Seca, Rio de Janeiro, on 27 November 2015 (Fig. 2; Pimenta & Alves Serpa 2017). Records of **European Starling** *Sturnus vulgaris* came from three sites in Rio Grande do Sul during 2014–2017 (Cavitione e Silva *et al.* 2017) and included numerous juveniles, providing evidence of the continuing spread of this non-native, Old World species. A female **Lophornis coquette**, thought to be **Rufous-crested L. delattrei** rather than the similar but geographically more remote **Spangled L. stictolophus**, was photographed in the Serra do Avisor, Acre, on 9 August 2017. Either taxon would be new for Brazil (de Andrade Plácido *et al.* 2018). Thiago Costa *et al.* (2017) report five new records of **Rondônia Bushbird** *Clytoctantes atrogularis* across three states (Mato



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2 Female Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus* (right) with Wilson's Phalaropes *P. tricolor* and Black-necked Stilts *Himantopus mexicanus*, Laguna de Araruama, Praia Seca, Rio de Janeiro, 27 November 2015 (Eduardo Pimenta). **3** Buff-fronted Owl *Aegolius harrisi*, Parque dos Falcões, Itabaiana, Sergipe, Brazil, November 2014 (Juan Manuel Ruiz-Esparza Aguilar). **4** Adult male Buffy-fronted Seedeater *Sporophila frontalis*, Cachoeira dos Borges, Mampituba, Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil, September 2016 (Ricardo Dossa Colvero).

Grosso, Amazonas and Rondônia), considerably extending its known range. Hitherto this enigmatic, Vulnerable species from Amazonia was known only from the holotype and three field records. Of similar significance, a **Brazilian Merganser** *Mergus octosetaceus* (Critically Endangered) photographed at Serra do Mar in August 2017 was the first in São Paulo for c.200 years (Nema-Neto *et al.* 2018). New for Sergipe state were **Buff-fronted Owl** *Aegolius harrisi* (Fig. 3; Ruiz-Esparza *et al.* 2017b), **Wedge-billed Woodcreeper** *Glyphorhynchus spirurus* (Ruiz-Esparza *et al.* 2017a) and **Silvery-cheeked Antshrike** *Sakesphorus cristatus* (Guimarães *et al.* 2017). First documented records for Rio Grande do Sul were **Paint-billed Crake** (Bertin *et al.* 2017) and **Mouse-coloured Tyrannulet** *Phaeomyias murina* (da Silveira Pereira 2017). **Buffy-fronted Seedeater** *Sporophila frontalis* has been rediscovered in the state, 133 years after the last record (Fig. 4; Gava Just *et al.* 2017). Guilherme *et al.* (2017) document four new species for Acre: **Least Bittern** *Ixobrychus exilis*, **Paint-billed Crake** *Neocrex erythrops*, **Plain-breasted Ground Dove** *Columbina minuta* and **Azure Gallinule** *Porphyrio flavirostris*. New for Piauí was **Sungrebe** *Heliornis fulica* (dos Santos Soares *et al.* 2017). New for São Paulo were **Coscoroba Swan** *Coscoroba coscoroba* (Alexandre *et al.* 2017), **Kerguelen Petrel** *Lugensa brevirostris* and **Light-mantled Albatross** *Phoebastria palpebrata* (both Chupil *et al.* 2018). New for Mato Grosso do Sul (plus a first for the Pantanal ecoregion and a range extension of c.1,000 km) was a **Lake Duck** *Oxyura vittata* (Severo-Neto *et al.* 2017). **Brazilian Ruby** *Clytolaema rubricauda* has been rediscovered in the same state after an absence of 130 years (Bencke *et al.* 2017). Three **Lesser Elaenia** *Elaenia chiriquensis* at Palmas, Parana, on 26 January 2017 extend the known range 700 km south west (Andriola & Marcon 2017). A (belated!) analysis of seabird specimens collected during beach surveys of Paraná during 1992–1994 reveals three new state

records: **Cory's Shearwater** *Calonectris diomedea*, **Sooty Shearwater** *Ardenna griseus* and **Snowy Sheathbill** *Chionis albus* (Daudt *et al.* 2017). The authors propose removal from the state avifauna of **White-capped Albatross** *Thalassarche cauta* and **Broad-billed Prion** *Pachyptila vittata* “due to the lack of tangible evidence”. New for Espírito Santo is **Pale Baywing** *Agelaioides fringillarius* (Bonfa *et al.* 2018).

Chile

Tejeda *et al.* (2017) present the first documented country records of **White-collared Swift** *Streptoprocne zonaris*. Birds were recorded in December 2017 and January 2018 at Cascada Invertida, Cordillera de Maule. Chile's first documented **Limpkin** *Aramus guarauna* was photographed at Hacienda Huenetelauquén, Coquimbo, in September 2016 (Fig. 5; Bravo *et al.* 2017). A decomposed **Broad-billed Prion** *Pachyptila vittata* found during a beached-bird survey in northern Chile on 28 February 2014 provided the species's first confirmed presence in Chilean waters (Portflitt-Toro *et al.* 2018). In *Neotropical Birding* 21: 12 and 21: 56, we reported that **Raimondi's Yellow Finch** *Sicalis raimondii* had been discovered in Chile. Subsequently, there have been several records from the Chaca and Camarones Valleys (Arica and Parinacota) from October 2016 to January 2017 (Medrano & Vizcarra 2017). These include a flock of 300 at Camarones, with suggestions of breeding. **Chocolate-vented Tyrant** *Neoxolmis rufiventris* was recorded c.600 km north of its known range, at Ñirehuao, Aysén, on 20 October 2014 (Godoy-Güinao *et al.* 2016). **Burrowing Parrot** *Cyanoliseus patagonus* has returned to the Maipo watershed near Santiago, after five decades of local extinction (González *et al.* 2017). Barros (2017a, 2017b) collates many interesting observations during 2016. These include: the first **Erect-crested Tinamou** *Eudromia elegans* for Magallanes region, in January; the first



5

5 Limpkin *Aramus guarauna*, Hacienda Huentelauquén, Coquimbo, Chile, September 2016 (Carlos Zuleta).

Buller's Albatross *Thalassarche bulleri* for Juan Fernández (November); the first documented country records of **Least Bittern** *Ixobrychus exilis* (in the Lluta Valley during April and Mejillones region in June); Chile's third **Wilson's Plover** *Charadrius wilsonia* (Huasco Valley, June); Chile's second to fourth **Least Terns** *Sternula antillarum* (Lluta Valley in June–July and November; and Tongoy in October); Chile's fourth **Black Tern** *Chlidonias niger* (Arica, October); Chile's first **Lesser Shirke-Tyrant** *Agriornis murina* (Rocuant-Andalién, January); Chile's third **Black-backed Grosbeak** *Pheucticus aureoventris* (Arica, May); Chile's first confirmed **Grey-breasted Martin** *Progne chalybea* (Arica/Parinacota, November–December); and the country's first **Bobolinks** *Dolichonyx oryzivorus* (Ascotán, February; and Rocuant-Andalién, April). Details of several of these will hopefully be published in due course.

Colombia

Renjifo *et al.* (2017) present details of surveys in August 2010 of the slope of Cerro Tacarcuna. These include Colombia's first confirmed records of **Ochraceous Wren** *Troglodytes ochraceus* and **Beautiful Treerunner** *Margarornis bellulus*. **Black-headed Antthrush** *Formicarius nigricapillus*, **Scaly-throated Foliage-gleaner** *Anabacerthia variegaticeps* and **Yellow-throated Chlorospingus** *Chlorospingus*

flavigularis were new for the Darién highlands.

The authors also unveiled previously overlooked specimens from 1980 that provide the first confirmed records for Colombia of **Sooty-faced Finch** *Arremon crassirostris*. Another addition to the Colombian avifauna was **Yellow-crowned Elaenia** *Myiopagis flavivertex*, with four records between October 2014 and January 2017 near Caño Matraca, Puerto Inírida, eastern Guainía (Flórez & Kirwan 2017). The first record of **Ash-throated Crake** *Mustelirallus albicollis* for the Cordillera Central of the Colombian Andes was a road-killed individual at Porce, Antioquia, on 11 September 2005 (Calderón-Franco *et al.* 2017). This record represents a range extension of 250–300 km.

Costa Rica

The Comité de Especies Raras y Registros Ornitológicos de Costa Rica provided an updated list of the birds of the country, in the light of changes made between October 2015 and September 2016 (Garrigues *et al.* 2016). Four species are formally added to the Costa Rican list: **Whistling Heron** *Syrigma sibilatrix* (see *Neotropical Birding* 21: 57), **Roseate Tern** *Sterna dougallii* (Guanacaste, 20 September 2015), **Eurasian Collared Dove** *Streptopelia decaocto* (Puntarenas, 20 February 2016) and **Eared Dove** *Zenaida auriculata* (Isla de Coco, 29 November 2015). The current country list stands at 918 species. Costa Rica's two previous records of **White-tailed Tropicbird** *Phaethon lepturus* came from Isla de Coco in the Pacific Ocean. The first documented record for continental Costa Rica was a bird flying north near Tortuguero on 12 April 2013 (Koenraads & Elizondo 2017). **Rufous-crested Coquette** *Lophornis delattrei* has been rediscovered in the country – the first records since at least 1906 (Vegal del Val 2017). An immature male was present at Rancho Naturalista, Cartago, from 30 October to 15 November 2016.

Cuba

Rodríguez Castaneda *et al.* (2018) present the second and third records of **Lazuli Bunting** *Passerina amoena* for Cuba and the West Indies. Birds were caught by local trappers in Ciego de Ávila province on 20 November 2012 and Ciudad de la Habana province in December 2013. Intriguingly, the authors also present photos of a male **White-winged Snowfinch** *Montifringilla nivalis* purportedly captured in Artemisa province on 12 February 2014. The authors suggest that the bird “probably arrived through vagrancy” on the basis that it “is not a popular cage bird anywhere”. Given the paucity of extralimital records of this montane, Old World species, and the authors' context of clearly exotic birds, this seems rather a bold claim.



6 Ecuador's first Manx Shearwater *Puffinus puffinus*, 2 km north of Isla San Cristóbal, Galápagos, Ecuador, 13 August 2011 (George L. Armistead).
7 Tawny-throated Dotterel *Oreopholus ruficollis*, La Chocolatera, Salinas, Ecuador, June 2015 (Jonas Nilsson/wildsumaco.com).
8 The first Swinhoe's Storm Petrel *Hydrobates monorhynchus* for South America: Île du Grand-Connétable Réserve Naturelle, French Guiana, 25 May 2017 (Jérémié Tribot).

Ecuador

The third report of the Committee for Ecuadorian Records in Ornithology (CERO) covers the period April 2014 to August 2015 (Freile *et al.* 2017). It reports six species new to Ecuador, one species new to continental Ecuador and four species with first documented records. The wholly new species are **Green-winged Teal** *Anas crecca* (December 2014; see *Neotropical Birding* 18: 49–50), **Manx Shearwater** *Puffinus puffinus* (2011; Fig. 6; see *Cotinga* 34: 186), **Buller's Albatross** *Thalassarche bulleri* (1997), unidentified **gannet** *Morus* sp. (2002; treated as hypothetical in the absence of documentation), **Long-billed Curlew** *Numenius americanus* (1997: sight record, so treated as hypothetical) and **Slaty Elaenia** *Elaenia strepera* (2014). The species new to Ecuador's continental landmass is **White-bellied Storm Petrel** *Fregretta grallaria* – although the observation was not documented, so the species is treated as hypothetical. The newly documented species are **Dunlin** *Calidris alpina* (2014), **(American) Herring Gull** *Larus (argentatus) smithsonianus* (2015; see *Neotropical Birding* 18: 49–50), **Long-tailed Skua** *Stercorarius longicaudus* (2008 and 2014) and **Grey Kingbird** *Tyrannus dominicensis* (2014). Furthermore, notable range extensions for 14 species are presented, as are new records of 12 rare species and the first modern record of **Tawny-throated Dotterel** *Oreopholus ruficollis* (Fig. 7). With the additions documented in the CERO report, the formal Ecuador list stands at 1,679 species (52 undocumented). The first and second records of **Black-billed Thrush** *Turdus ignobilis* for the Ecuadorian Andes came from Parque



Jipiro (2,074 m), Loja, in August–September 2015 (Ordóñez-Delgado *et al.* 2017). They raise the species's known elevational range by c.500 m.

French Guiana

New for South America was a **Swinhoe's Storm Petrel** *Hydrobates monorhynchus* caught by hand when it collided with a small hut at Île du Grand-Connétable Réserve Naturelle on 25 May 2017 (Fig. 8; Flood *et al.* 2017).



9 Guadeloupe's first Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides*, Désirade, 10 November 2018 (Anthony Levesque).

10 Drake Blue-winged Teal *Anas discors*, Campo Leon, Presidente Hayes, Paraguay, 6 August 2016 (Oscar Bordón). The country's first documented record, following two previous sight records.

11 Stripe-backed Bittern *Ixobrychus involucris*, Reserva Ecológica Taricaya, Madre de Dios, Peru, 22 May 2015 (Rachel Kilby).

12 Great Crested Flycatcher *Myiarchus crinitus*, Canoas de Punta Sal, Tumbes, Peru, 8 November 2015 (Dennis Osorio).

Guadeloupe

The first **Squacco Heron** for the Caribbean was photographed at Désirade on 10 November 2018 (Fig. 9; A. Levesque *per* C. Sharpe *in litt.* 2018).

Mexico

New to Chihuahua state was a **Yellow-throated Warbler** *Setophaga dominica*, present in Aldama from 4 January to 2 February 2016 (González Carrasco 2017). Another new state record was a **Common Loon** *Gavia immer* at Playa Azul, Oaxaca, on 13 July 2014 (Villagómez *et al.* 2017). Five species were reported new to Zacatecas state: **West Mexican Chachalaca** *Ortalis poliocephala*, **Sinaloa Martin** *Progne sinaloae*, **Rufous-winged Sparrow** *Peucaea carpalis*, **Song Sparrow** *Melospiza melodia* and **Blue Bunting** *Cyanocompsa parellina* (Pérez-Arteaga *et al.* 2017).

Paraguay

Clay *et al.* (2017) present the first documented Paraguayan records of **Laughing Gull** *Leucophaeus atricilla* (Bahía de Asunción, Central department, on 2 February 2011), **Franklin's Gull** *L. pipixcan* (Presidente Hayes on 17 June 2004 and 11 July 2007), **Gull-billed Tern** *Gelochelidon nilotica* (Presidente Hayes on 25 July 1999, 3–4 July 2005 and 25 October 2014) and **Whiskered Tern** *Chlidonias hybrida*

(Estancia La Graciela, Misiones, on 14 January 2016; see also Clay 2016). Reports of three other species are discussed and treated as hypothetical: **Kelp Gull** *Larus dominicanus*, **Snowy-crowned Tern** *Sterna trudeaui* and **Royal Tern** *Thalasseus maximus*. Lesterhuis *et al.* (2018) present the first documented records of **Speckled Teal** *Anas flavirostris*, **Yellow-billed Pintail** *Anas georgica*, **Blue-winged Teal** *Anas discors* (Fig. 10) and **Red-gartered Coot** *Fulica armillata*.

Peru

The first two country records of **Tropical Mockingbird** *Mimus gilvus* come from two locations in Loreto in June and August 2017; the latter was photographed (Cuelo Pizarro 2018). Following four records without supporting evidence, Peru's first fully documented **Stripe-backed Bittern** *Ixobrychus involucris* was at Reserva Ecológica Taricaya, 26 km northeast of Puerto Maldonado, Madre de Dios, on 22 May 2015 (Fig. 11; Kilby *et al.* 2018). The third record of **Great Crested Flycatcher** *Myiarchus crinitus* for Peru (and the first to be accepted by the national rarities committee) was photographed at Canoas de Punta Sal, Tumbes, on 8 November 2015 (Fig. 12; García-Bravo & Osorio 2017). Two groups of **Scimitar-winged Piha** *Lipaugus uropygialis* in May 2004 at Santuario Nacional Megantoni, Cuzco, provide only the second Peruvian locality



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13 Flock of Ring-necked Duck *Aythya collaris*, Coronie Dyke, Coronie, Totness, Suriname, 9 November 2017 (Thomas Kerkhove and Luciano Doest). **14** Ruff *Calidris pugnax*, at sea off Suriname (▲ 8.0704, -54.2977), 18 August 2015 (Andy Williams). **15** South Polar Skua *Stercorarius maccormicki*, at sea off Suriname (▲ 6.1833, -54.1833), 25 May 2014 (Tomas Willems). **16** Black-and-white Warbler *Mniotilta varia*, at sea off Suriname (▲ 8.1481, - 54.0366), 16 July 2015 (James Saulino).

for the species and a range extension of c.400 km south east from Puno (Lane & Pequeño 2017). In March 2009, a new site was discovered for **Acre Antshrike** *Thamophilus divisorius* – only the fourth known for this species (Gonzalez & Acuy 2017). **Orange-crowned Euphonia** *Euphonia saturata* was documented for Lambayeque during 2016, a range extension south-east of 289 km (Lazo Paredes 2017). A **Cinnamon-bellied Ground Tyrant** *Muscisaxicola capistratus* at Punta San Juan, Ica, on 27 August 2015 was the first for the Peruvian coast (Ampuero Merino *et al.* 2017) – an intriguing sea-level record of this high-altitude tyrannid. **Rufous-collared Sparrow** *Zonotrichia capensis* has been documented in the Peruvian Amazon for the first time, in Loreto and San Martín departments (Ugarte & Marianella Lavalle 2018).

Suriname

The first **Audouin's Gull** *Ichthyaetus audouinii* for Suriname (and mainland South America) was a third-calendar-year photographed at New Amsterdam on 22 March 2018 and still present on 9 April (☞ surinamebirds.nl/php/bird.php?laau). It appears to be the same individual first seen in Trinidad and Tobago in 2016–17 (see *Neotropical Birding* 22: 54–58). Apparently the first country record of **Ring-necked Duck** *Aythya collaris* comprised a group of nine birds at Coronie Dyke, Coronie, Totness, on

9 November 2017 (Fig. 13; Thomas Kerkhove and Luciano Doest *in litt.* 2018). Surveys in Suriname's territorial waters from 2013–2015 documented at-sea records of 10 taxa not previously known from the country (Willems *et al.* 2017). These were **Manx Shearwater** *Puffinus puffinus*, **Ruff** *Calidris pugnax* (Fig. 14), **South Polar Skua** *Stercorarius maccormicki* (Fig. 15), **Long-tailed Jaeger** *S. longicaudus*, **Sandwich Tern** *Thalasseus sandvicensis acuflavidus*, **Roseate Tern** *Sterna dougallii*, **Bridled Tern** *Onychoprion anaethetus*, **Black Noddy** *Anous minutus*, **Scarlet Tanager** *Piranga olivacea* and **Black-and-white Warbler** *Mniotilta varia* (Fig. 16).

Trinidad and Tobago

A **White-eyed Vireo** *Vireo griseus* photographed at Erin Savannahs, Trinidad, on 9–12 January 2018 constitutes the country's first record (Fig. 17; N. Lallsingh *in litt.* 2018).

17 White-eyed Vireo *Vireo griseus*, Erin Savannahs, Trinidad, January 2018 (Nigel Lallsingh).



17

Uruguay

Eastern Kingbird *Tyrannus tyrannus* has been confirmed to occur (presumably as a vagrant) in Uruguay, following publication of four records between 1995 and 2016, two of which were documented by photographs (Rodríguez-Cajaville *et al.* 2017). Potentially new for the country was an **Elegant Tern** *Thalasseus elegans* photographed at Punta del Este, Maldonado, on 19–23 February 2018 (T. Rabau *in litt.* 2018)

Venezuela

To suitable fanfare, the American Bird Conservancy (2017) announced the rediscovery of **Táchira Antpitta** *Grallaria chthonia*, an enigmatic, Critically Endangered species not seen since it was first recorded in 1955–56. In June 2016, a team led by Jhonathan Miranda found the species in Parque Nacional El Tamá. Miranda was also involved in finding a new bird for Venezuela (and apparently only the second documented record for South America): a **Piping Plover** *Charadrius melodus* photographed at El Pico, Falcón, on 25 February 2018, by a team also including a former *Neotropical Birding* editor (Fig. 18; eBird checklist S43174377; Chris Sharpe *in litt.* 2018). The first country record of **White-eyed Vireo** *Vireo griseus* comes from Reserva Biológica de Montecano, Falcón state, on 11 February 2017 (Rodríguez *et al.* 2017). Montecano also hosted **Northern Parula** *Setophaga americana* (first record since 2008) and **Magnolia Warbler** *S. manchada* (third country record); all three vagrants were present on 11 February. Also new for Venezuela was **Ash-coloured Tapaculo** *Myornis senilis*, with three individuals at at Parque Nacional El Tamá in May 2016 (Miranda & Kvarnäck 2017). Rengifo & Puente (2017) present a number of noteworthy records from the Venezuelan Andes and Maracaibo basin, covering a 15-year period. These include the country's 2nd–4th records of **Cinnamon Teal** *Anas cyanoptera* (all at Laguna de Mucubaji in 2007, 2010 and 2014), and 2nd–7th records of **Northern Harrier** *Circus cyaneus* (same site, 2007–2015). The authors also present details of: 19 species new for the Venezuelan

Andes (including five species of shorebird at the same site, Lagunda de Mucubaji); seven species new

18 Piping Plover *Charadrius melodus*, El Pico, Falcón, Venezuela, 25 February 2018 (Christopher J. Sharpe). The first for Venezuela and second documented record for South America.



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for the western slopes of the Venezuelan Andes; one species new for the eastern slope of the same range; 10 species new for Mérida state; three species new for Trujillo; and one species new for Portuguesa.

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NBC Conservation Awards update

Compiled by Christopher J. Sharpe and Rob Clay

Excitingly, the Neotropical Bird Club Conservation Awards Programme continues to grow, both in the amount of funds the NBC is able to grant and the number of proposals received. The organisers of the Programme share highlights of the bird-conservation work delivered.

The Neotropical Bird Club Conservation Awards Programme (NBC CAP) continues to finance some of the most exciting bird conservation projects in the region, and we are privileged to be able to support highly experienced professionals with well-established track records in bird conservation, as well as promising early-career individuals. We are very grateful for the ongoing support of the March Conservation Fund of Tides Foundation, which continues to be a major contributor to the NBC Conservation Fund, especially to Ivan Samuels who also plays an active role in project evaluation. For the second year running, we received a generous donation in memory of Roger Lewis Jones, specifically to support projects in southeast Brazil, which enabled us to make an additional grant available to SAVE Brasil for vital work to conserve the recently rediscovered Blue-eyed Ground Dove *Columbina*

cyanopis. As usual, awards of \$1,500, \$3,000 and \$5,000 were available.

2018 awards

Our January 2018 awards round received 20 applications. Twelve were subject to detailed evaluation, all but one of which were submitted to NBC Council with four successfully obtaining NBC CAP funding to a total of \$12,000. Some 32 proposals were received for our July 2018 round: 25 were subject to detailed evaluation, 12 of which were submitted to NBC Council with half successfully obtaining NBC CAP funding totalling \$18,500. The total amount disbursed during 2018 was therefore \$30,500. The ten projects financed are summarised in the box below.

PROJECTS FUNDED BY THE NBC CONSERVATION AWARDS PROGRAMME DURING 2018

- Non-traditional conservation schemes to protect pine-oak forests and habitats for endangered Neotropical-Nearctic migratory and resident bird species in Chiapas, Mexico, with an emphasis on the Endangered Golden-cheeked Warbler *Setophaga chrysoparia*. Emerenciano Rivera Rivera. Awarded \$1,500.
- Status, ecology and conservation of the Antioquia Brushfinch *Atlapetes blancae* in northern Antioquia, Colombia. Yohana Andrea Lopera Salazar. Awarded \$3,000.
- Distribution, occupation and priority areas for the conservation of Yellow-headed Manakin *Chloropipo flavicapilla* in the Eastern Andes of Colombia. Néstor Raúl Espejo Delgado. Awarded \$3,000.
- Conservation of the Critically Endangered Blue-eyed Ground Dove *Columbina cyanopis* in the Brazilian Cerrado. Albert Gallon de Aguiar. Awarded \$5,000.
- Defining the optimal conservation stronghold for the Critically Endangered Horned Curassow *Pauxi unicornis* in Bolivia. Bennett Hennessey. Awarded \$3,000.
- An update on the current threats and conservation status of 'crested' eagles in north Argentina. Facundo Barbar. Awarded \$3,000.
- How do threatened bamboo specialists [White-bearded Antshrike *Biatas nigropectus*, Temminck's Seedeater *Sporophila falcirostris* & Purple-winged Ground-dove *Claravis geoffroyi*] respond to mass flowering and die-off of *Guadua trinii* bamboo [in Argentina]? Kristina Cockle. Awarded \$3,000.
- Action to conserve the Endangered Iberá Seedeater *Sporophila iberaensis* in Paraguay. Tatiana Galluppi Selich. Awarded \$3,000.
- Nest sites and conservation of Ringed Storm Petrel *Oceanodroma (Hydrobates) hornbyi* in the Atacama Desert, Chile. Fernando Medrano Martínez. Awarded \$3,000.
- Colony Guardians for the Saffron-cowled Blackbird *Xanthopsar flavus* [in Argentina]. María Florencia Pucheta. Awarded \$3,000.

Updates from past awards

The following summary highlights achievements from projects that NBC has already funded, as judged by the recipients.

Black-capped Petrel in Dominican Republic

Foraging habitat of the Endangered Black-capped Petrel Pterodroma hasitata: using spatial ecology to inform conservation. \$2,989. Project dates: April–December 2018.

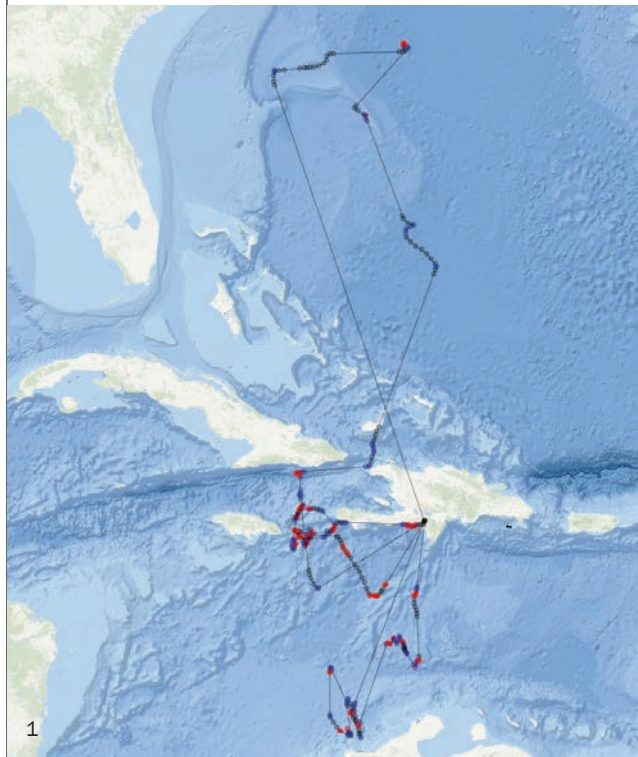
A gadfly petrel endemic to the Caribbean, Black-capped Petrel *Pterodroma hasitata* has a fragmented and declining population and is considered Endangered throughout its range. In its marine habitat, this seabird is exposed to many threats including fisheries activity, offshore energy development, marine pollution and climate change. Our understanding of the species's habitat preferences and associated threats to its survival are limited by the current lack of information on its foraging ecology. Therefore, with funding from the Neotropical Bird Club and BirdsCaribbean, we aimed to gather fine-scale data on movements of individual Black-capped Petrels breeding in the Sierra de Bahoruco, Dominican Republic, and to study their diet through a molecular analysis of faecal DNA.

In April 2018, we travelled to the high mountains of the Sierra de Bahoruco where petrels nest in underground burrows. Since 2010, more than 45 sparsely distributed burrows have been discovered in this area, 30 km inland and 2000 m in elevation. Using one-way traps, we captured 12 chick-rearing adults as they came back at night to feed their chick. We equipped nine with remote-download GPS loggers taped to tail feathers and collected faeces for later analysis of prey DNA. We also deployed three base-stations near clusters of nests to download and store track data from foraging petrels upon their return to nest sites.

Three of the nine loggers transmitted data to the base-stations and recorded foraging trips lasting from 8–11 days and covering distances of 2,000–4,000 km. Two petrels occupied waters in the Caribbean Sea for the duration of their foraging trip while the third travelled to Gulf Stream waters off the United States coast. Foraging behaviour appeared to be associated with physical processes such as the Guajira upwelling off Colombia and water temperature fronts in the Gulf Stream. These two areas are subject to the greatest fishing effort from the commercial longline fishery – a conservation concern for the species. While our results showed differences in individual choices of foraging areas,

they confirmed the findings of Jodice *et al.* (2015) that petrels utilise the Caribbean basin frequently. Use of Gulf-Stream waters in the western North Atlantic was not common in either our study or that of Jodice *et al.* (2015). The data collected from GPS tags provide an opportunity to examine at-sea behaviour and flight paths in more detail than previously possible. Interestingly, in two instances tagged petrels rested at sea close to the coasts of Haiti (where most petrel colonies are located) and Cuba (where it is suspected that Black-capped Petrels might nest); this behaviour is consistent with 'coastal rafting' in which individuals sit in a tight flock on the water near breeding colonies, waiting for dusk to come ashore. We also found that tracked petrels returned to the colony at night and that one did so by following the general path of a river bed.

We are assessing the performance of the GPS loggers and attempting to determine why data were not transmitted from six of the nine tags. It may be that restrictive battery capacity due to their small size combined with relatively long foraging trips and nest visits of short duration (petrels stay only a few minutes at their burrow) may have limited



1 Movements of GPS-tracked Black-capped Petrels *Pterodroma hasitata*, colour-coded by behaviour, where grey = transit, red = rest, and blue = foraging (Yvan Satgé).

the connection between tags and base-stations. Although only three loggers functioned, we still were able to add new information to our understanding of their foraging behaviour and therefore continue to enhance our knowledge of the species. This expedition also allowed us to build capacity of staff at the conservation NGO Grupo Jaragua and to strengthen research collaboration. In summary, our data reinforced the necessity to continue to evaluate threats associated with fisheries and those associated with urban lighting and terrestrial wind farms near flight paths to and from colonies. Over the coming months, we will analyse the faecal samples to assess the petrel's diet and to better estimate threats associated with longline fisheries. For further information, see birdscaribbean.org/2018/07/flying-with-the-devil-part-i-on-the-ridge.

Ernst Rupp, Yvan Satgé and Patrick Jodice

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Grenadian birds of conservation concern

Distribution, diversity, and abundance of Grenadian birds, including endemic and restricted-range species. US\$1,500. Project dates: January 2017–December 2018.

Grenada is a small tropical island located at the extreme southern end of the Lesser Antilles chain in the Caribbean. It hosts 35 documented species of resident landbirds including the Endangered Grenada Hook-billed Kite *Chondrohierax uncinatus mirus*, the Critically Endangered Grenada Dove *Leptotila wellsi*, the near-endemic Grenada flycatcher *Myiarchus nugator*, and the regional endemic Lesser Antillean Tanager *Tangara cucullata*.

Unfortunately, the island lacks detailed bird surveys, and very little is known about the conservation status of restricted-range and endemic species. The island is undergoing rapid economic and land-use changes that may affect the conservation status of Grenada's birds. This study therefore aimed to identify birds or bird habitat in Grenada of conservation concern, to help develop proper management plans for existing protected areas, to help identify habitat types and requirements for related bird species across the Caribbean, and to collect baseline data for future research in Grenada.

A NBC Conservation Award was granted in 2017 to conduct avian research on Grenada. However, thanks to additional funding from Birds Caribbean (David S. Lee Fund for the Conservation of Caribbean Birds), we were able to extend our



2 Ramon Williams and Udy Fredrick effecting outreach programme with Lesterre Roman Catholic School, Grenada, September 2017 (John Holas).

field research to the two sister islands in the Lesser Antilles (Carriacou and Petite Martinique), and three offshore islands (Ronde, Caille, and Hog Islands). Funding also enabled us to implement an outreach programme, helping primary and secondary students to identify birds.

Across the islands overall, we conducted 488 point-counts across 54 sites (eight-plus point-counts per site) at dusk or dawn. We also recorded habitat type and land-use at each point. Sufficient data were obtained to analyse 23 bird species. We calculated the density and abundance of each species across the islands and compared them to the main island, Grenada. The next step in this project is to make distribution maps of each species analysed and finish writing up the manuscript for publication.

Ramon Williams

Declining insectivorous birds in Brazilian Amazonia

Does microclimate change explain observed declines of terrestrial insectivores? US\$3,920. Project dates: May 2017–19 (ongoing).

The year 2019 will mark the 40th anniversary of the establishment of one of the world's most important tropical ecology research sites, the Biological Dynamics of Forest Fragments Project near Manaus, Brazil. Ever since 1979, ornithologists have captured and banded (ringed) understory birds to track their response to forest fragmentation. Over the years, it became clear that carving up the rainforest into cookie-cutter pieces was bad for most birds, and many species – most strikingly, terrestrial insectivores – disappeared from isolated patches.

Phil Stouffer, Cameron Rutt and I have recently turned our focus away from fragments, instead looking at bird-capture data from control sites over the past four decades. All sites are large, pristine tracts of forest. Surprisingly, we found a disturbing pattern: many fewer terrestrial insectivores were

caught during the past decade than in the early 1980s. Capture rates for species like Wing-banded Antbird *Myrmornis torquata* and Black-tailed Leaf-tosser *Sclerurus caudacutus* have fallen by more than 90%. Nowadays it is a genuine rarity for a birder to stumble across one of these species, something that was reportedly never the case at our study sites. The apparent disappearance of terrestrial insectivores even in seemingly pristine continuous forest is very alarming, and we need to understand what is going on.

That is where our NBC Conservation Award comes in, providing critical funds for the next phase of our research. The 'microclimate hypothesis' (which

3 Jairo Lopes holds a tagged Wing-banded Antbird *Myrmornis torquata* (Biological Dynamics of Forest Fragments Project, Amazonas, Brazil, June 2017), a species whose numbers have declined precipitously at this study site.

4 Roosting Variegated Antpitta *Grallaria varia*, with GPS 'backpack' attached, Biological Dynamics of Forest Fragments Project, Amazonas, Brazil, July 2017.

5 Cabo Frio, Biological Dynamics of Forest Fragments Project, Amazonas, Brazil, July 2018. Substantial areas of *terra firme* forest in Amazonia have been largely untouched by direct anthropogenic disturbance, but are its birds affected by other, more insidious anthropogenic effects?

6 Cabo Frio, Biological Dynamics of Forest Fragments Project, Amazonas, Brazil, July 2017. The domain of the terrestrial insectivores is the relatively cool forest floor, a place reached by less than 5% of sunlight.

Figs. 3–6 by Vitek Jirinec ([flickr.com/photos/vitek_jirinec/](https://www.flickr.com/photos/vitek_jirinec/)).

argues that terrestrial insectivores may be sensitive to the hotter, drier and brighter conditions of forest fragments, relative to their typical haunts deep in the forest interior) currently lacks unequivocal support, but could explain why terrestrial insectivores are disappearing from seemingly untouched rainforest. Under climate change, the Amazon appears to be getting hotter and drier. If we find that, in contrast to non-vulnerable species, declining birds actively seek cool and wet 'refugia', we might just see a link between the loss of terrestrial insectivores and climate change.

Thanks in part to the generous support of the NBC CAP, we outfitted more than 80 terrestrial insectivorous birds with tiny 'backpacks' carrying sensors that collect environmental data every few minutes for at least a year. Catching such species is hardly easy, but recapturing the same individual a year later to download the collected data is like looking for a musical needle in the rainforest haystack. One Black-tailed Leaf-tosser proved the point, being recaptured 2.4 km from its original capture location. Draw a circle with that radius and that is a lot of forest to comb through without trails. Despite these obstacles, this season we recovered 50% of tags that were deployed last year, which took five months of nearly continuous effort, often using two teams.

The research is ongoing and, although we have lots of data, we have few concrete results to report so far. However, while skimming through the millions of data points we currently have, I can already say that Neotropical birds are doing some interesting things when no one is watching. Let's hope these data provide a clue as to why some of the rarest and most sensitive birds seem to be disappearing from undisturbed primary forest. Although bittersweet, it would be a fitting way to mark the occasion of the project's 40th anniversary.

Vitek Jirinec

Black-fronted Piping Guan in southeast Brazil

Conservation of Black-fronted Piping-Guan Pipile jacutinga in the Brazilian Atlantic Forest through reintroduction and monitoring. \$4,830. Project dates: November 2017–2019 (ongoing).





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7 Captive-bred Black-fronted Piping-Guan *Pipile jacutinga* about to be released, São Francisco Xavier, São José dos Campos, São Paulo, Brazil, October 2018 (Birdwatching Atlantic).

8 Team members monitoring released Black-fronted Piping-Guans *Pipile jacutinga*, São Francisco Xavier, São José dos Campos, São Paulo, Brazil, October 2018 (Alecsandra Tassoni).

The Endangered Black-fronted Piping-Guan has undergone substantial population declines, in response to which SAVE Brasil set up its *Projeto Jacutinga* programme in 2010 (with support from Petrobras in São Paulo and Fundação Grupo Boticário in Rio de Janeiro). The initiative is a reintroduction and monitoring programme, aiming to increase the species's population in southeast Brazil through captive breeding and release of individuals into the wild. The project benefits a species that has an important ecological role, since it swallows fruits whole, so its faeces disperse seeds, which can help the regrowth of forests.

The specific objectives of this project are to: support breeders in the proper husbandry of captive

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Black-fronted Piping-Guans for release into the wild; rehabilitate, release and monitor individuals in the wild; and raise awareness of the importance of the conservation of the Piping-Guan and other Atlantic Forest birds to local communities while maintaining the involvement of enforcement and surveillance agencies.

The project is being developed in Reserva Ecológica de Guapiaçu (REGUA, Rio de Janeiro) and in Parque Estadual Serra do Mar and Serra da Mantiqueira (São Paulo). These areas hold continuous tracts of well-preserved forests within the species's original distribution. Since 2016, 20 captive-bred individuals have been released: 12 in Serra da Mantiqueira, six in Serra do Mar and two in REGUA. All released birds are being monitored by satellite or radio transmitters and active field searches, with the active participation of local communities. The NBC Conservation Award (a donation made to the Club in memory of Roger Lewis Jones) was crucial for purchasing an antenna and radio transmitters for monitoring the released birds. In São Francisco Xavier, two females are being monitored daily to

>> CONSERVATION AWARDS

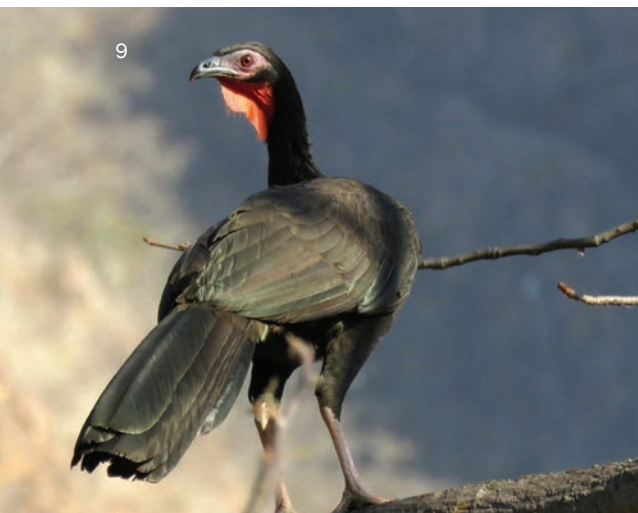
assess their adaptation to the wild. In February 2018, the reintroduced female we called ‘Mangue’, who had paired with a male named ‘Preto’ (released a year earlier), was nesting atop a 6-metre high fern. Mangue incubated two eggs for 17 days, only leaving the nest to feed. However, unfortunately, after heavy rains the eggs were found broken on the ground. This was the first record of nesting by reintroduced birds; it suggests that these animals are adapting to the wild.

Alessandra Tassoni

White-winged Guan in Peru

Until last year, the Endangered White-winged Guan *Penelope albipennis* was one of Peru’s most highly threatened species, in one of the world’s most imperilled families, the Cracidae. Following its discovery in 1876 it was presumed extinct until its rediscovery a century later in 1977. The current population is estimated at perhaps 300 individuals inhabiting dry deciduous forest in ravines in the foothills of the western Andes in a relatively restricted area in northwest Peru. The NBC Conservation Awards Programme was set up with the aim of ameliorating the outlook for survival of species in precisely such a precarious state, so we have been happy to have been able to finance two projects, approved in 2015 and 2016, both executed by CORBIDI. As a result of improved information, in 2018 BirdLife International ‘downlisted’ White-winged Guan from Critically Endangered to Endangered (see page 53 of this issue).

9 White-winged Guan *Penelope albipennis*, Quebrada Carrizal, caserío Río Seco, Morropon, Piura, Peru, January 2014 (Elio Nuñez).



9



10



11



12

10 White-winged Guan poster, funded by NBC.

11–12 NBC-funded education materials being used in local schools, Peru (Fabiola Riva Melofiro).

Evaluation of information gaps, and environmental education, for White-winged Guan Penelope albipennis in the north of its range. \$1,200. Project dates: March 2016–September 2018.

The project aimed mainly to find new sites for White-winged Guan, following analysis of the species’s distribution and habitat using satellite images. A team of eight volunteers visited six ravines which had been identified as potential new sites. Two of these held a total of 15 birds, and a third site was reported to support seven birds. The most important ravine, En Medio, is seven hours’ walk from the nearest road, but it was worth the trek when researchers found 11 birds.

APPLYING FOR NBC FUNDING

The deadlines for NBC Conservation Award Programme applications are 1 January and 1 July each year. Full details of the Awards Programme and application process can be found at neotropicalbirdclub.org/conservation/conservation-fund/. Without the generous support of independent organisations and private

individuals, the Conservation Awards Programme would be unable to finance so many worthwhile projects. If you or your organisation would like to donate to the programme please contact the authors. With additional funding we will be able to do even more to help local conservationists protect Neotropical birds.

Given the guan's rarity, observers took care to exclude any possibility of double-counting. Despite drawing a blank on the present surveys, Mangamanguilla Private Conservation Area also looks hopeful, with local reports of seven individuals between two ravines. Not far away, Quebrada Carrizal produced four birds.

Elio Ivan Nuñez Cortez

*A second outreach campaign for the protection of the Critically Endangered White-winged Guan *Penelope albigularis* in the Tumbesian region of Peru. \$3,000.*

Project dates: August 2016–January 2018.

The first White-winged Guan education and outreach campaign began in 2009, after a socio-economic study in and around the species' range. The objective was to work directly with communities living next to White-winged Guans to raise awareness of the plight of the species. Since then, there have been several campaigns, the second of which was supported by a NBC Conservation Award.

The grant was used in three parts. An initial outlay covered the cost of reprinting a poster and stickers using a painting by Dan Lane, a Louisiana State University researcher with a long history of work in Peru, and of broadcasting bulletins on local radio stations. The bulk of the funds enabled fieldworkers to disseminate information in 43 villages and population centres close to known White-winged Guan habitat in Piura, Lambayeque and Cajamarca regions. Subsequently, in late 2017, the team measured people's knowledge of the bird and its conservation, in order to determine whether or not the campaigns have been effective.

Local knowledge and awareness of the species continues to increase, but there remain places where people do not know that the guan is threatened and protected by law. In a few places, local residents continue to take eggs and hunt the birds themselves. However, unlike previous campaigns, local residents

themselves warned their neighbours about the threats to the species' survival and persuaded them that such behaviour is no longer acceptable.

The education and awareness-raising process continues. Further funds and support are required to increase the length of visits, and to make educational materials for local school teachers, as well as to strengthen relations with local authorities and the police. All project material can be found at corbidi.org/educacion-ambiental.html.

Fabiola Riva Melofiro

CHRISTOPHER J. SHARPE & ROB CLAY

NBC Conservation Award Programme Co-ordinators

✉ nbcawards@gmail.com

Opportunities to help the Club

Do you live near to Rutland Water, UK, and have space (such as an attic) where we might store display material for the Club's stand at the British Birdwatching Fair (Birdfair)? From time to time we need volunteers to take on roles for the Club. These are not trustee positions so do not involve joining Council or attending Council meetings. We are particularly keen to find people with knowledge of web-editing, marketing or database management. In each case, if you are keen to help or learn more, please e-mail ✉ secretary@neotropicalbirdclub.org.

NBC Noticeboard

Compiled by Chris Balchin, NBC Secretary



NBC AGM 2019

The NBC will hold its 2019 AGM at the British Birdwatching Fair (Rutland Water, UK) on 17 August 2019. For details of time, place and agenda, please see the NBC website or the flyer inserted with hard copies of this magazine.

Amazon Smile

You can help the NBC when making purchases through Amazon. If you sign up to Amazon Smile and nominate the NBC as your beneficiary, we will receive 0.5% of the cost of any purchase you make. More details can be found at neotropicalbirdclub.org

Join the NBC community on social media

The Neotropical Bird Club is active on social media. The Neotropical Bird Club Facebook group (www.facebook.com/groups/31491408108/) has nearly 5,200 members, and new threads and images meeting the group's guidelines are posted daily. NBC's Twitter handle is @NeoBirdClub. We tweet NBC news and all things to do with birding, ornithology and bird conservation in the NBC region. Join us!

Members' e-mail addresses

With ever increasing postage costs NBC can save considerable money by using e-mail to communicate with members. We would like to move to sending membership renewals by e-mail instead of by post. If we do not have your preferred e-mail address or you have changed it recently it would help NBC if you could please send it to us at membership@neotropicalbirdclub.org.

NBC 25th anniversary celebrations

The NBC turns 25 in 2019. We are celebrating this milestone in a number of 25th-anniversary-themed ways.

1. Join us for a celebratory dinner on 15 August 2019 at the Wisteria Hotel, Oakham, UK – timed to coincide perfectly with the British Birdwatching Birdfair! The three-course meal, with after-dinner guest speaker, will cost £25 (or €/€ equivalent). Book via the NBC website neotropicalbirdclub.org or e-mail secretary@neotropicalbirdclub.org
2. *Neotropical Birding 25*, published in September 2019, will feature articles celebrating the NBC's work since we published the first issue of *Cotinga* in 1994. Learn how the NBC was created; look back across a quarter of a century of Neotropical discoveries and books; and discover what has happened to species and sites featured in our early publications.
3. The NBC has made available, on a first come first served basis, 25 online 2019 memberships to anyone over 18 and under 25 (terms apply). If you know some qualifying person who is interested in Neotropical birds please either send their details to the Secretary or ask them to make direct contact.
4. The NBC will be holding a one-day joint conference with the British Ornithologists' Club on 26 October 2019 in the Flett Theatre, Natural History Museum, South Kensington, London. Attendance is open to all and entrance is free. The conference will include a range of talks on Neotropical ornithology. The programme will appear on the NBC website in due course.
5. We are celebrating through a revamped anniversary logo, kindly designed by Anahi Plenge Pardo, see above, page 2 and page 61.

Johan Ingels

The NBC was very sad to learn of the passing of Johan Ingels in November 2018. Johan kindly served as our representative in Belgium, wrote regularly for *Neotropical Birding* and contributed much to the ornithological knowledge of French Guiana. He will be missed.

NBC at the British Birdwatching Fair in 2018

We were pleased to meet many NBC members during the British Birdwatching Fair (Rutland Water, UK, August 2018). Members were able to collect copies of *Neotropical Birding* 23 and *Cotinga* 41 – both hot off the press. We are grateful to the 'Birdfair' organisers for allowing us to hold our AGM during the Fair. Once again, we had a successful raffle – and thank both those who donated prizes and those who bought tickets. Ian Lycett scooped first prize – Swarovski EL 10x42 binoculars (courtesy of Swarovski Optik UK; Fig. 1). Sonia Jupp won second prize – seven days accommodation at Ecuador's El Séptimo Paraíso lodge (courtesy of El Séptimo Paraíso and Ana-Lucia Goetschel). Steve Pilkington won third prize – a copy of the book *Bird families of the world* plus a 1-year subscription to *HBW Alive* (courtesy of Lynx Edicions).



Sponsored Memberships

Every year we allocate a number of sponsored memberships to people in the Neotropical region who are unable to join the Neotropical Bird Club under normal circumstances. These are chosen from suggestions by NBC members. If you know of someone in the Neotropics who you think would benefit from being a member of the NBC, but who cannot afford to join, please e-mail ✉ secretary@neotropicalbirdclub.org. Please pass us their details and explain why you judge the Club should grant them sponsorship.

Please can members consider upgrading their membership to Sponsored Membership level? This will enable the NBC to allocate more sponsorships to deserving Neotropical ornithologists and birders. If you choose not to specify a recipient we will allocate one from the list of suggestions submitted by members.

Updated Privacy and Cookies Notice

The EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) came into effect on 25 May 2018. GDPR enhances previous data protection legislation in order to improve protection of your personal data (such as your name and address). The NBC takes your privacy very seriously. We are committed to taking good care of your personal data. We never sell your personal data and only share it with individuals or organisations who need it to provide services for the NBC (e.g. to send NBC journals or merchandise to you). We are committed to meeting regulatory requirements: e.g. we will only e-mail or post to you specific information on fundraising trips, raffle tickets, volunteering opportunities and regional developments if you have 'opted in'; you can adjust your preferences at any time at neotropicalbirdclub.org/keeping-in-touch

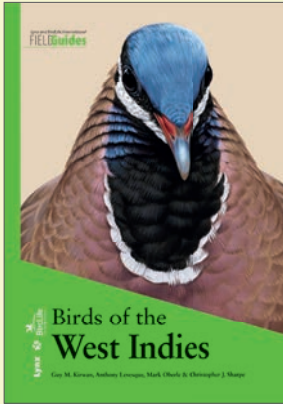
You can read about how we collect, use and share your personal data, see the 'Privacy and Cookies Notice' at neotropicalbirdclub.org/privacy-cookies, e-mail ✉ secretary@neotropicalbirdclub.org or write to us at the NBC address on the inside front cover. We will regularly review and update the NBC's 'Privacy and Cookies Notice'. We will post any update on the NBC website.

1 Ian Lycett (left) receiving first prize in the 2018 NBC raffle – a pair of Swarovski EL 10x42 binoculars – from Peter Antoniou of Swarovski Optik UK (middle) and NBC Chair David Fisher (right).

Donations – and making them regularly

We are grateful to John Caddick, John M. Dixon, Douglas Faulder, Keith Fisher, Ben Garmon, Stephen E. Gast, Alan Graham, Vicky Graham, Alan Dale Hands, John C. Harding, the late Johan Ingels, the March Conservation Fund of Tides Foundation, Bill and Jack Moorhead, Eric J. Pilcher, Gareth Rees, David R. Stoddard, Jens Thalund, Frank G. Witebsky and Barry Edward Wright for their recent donations to the NBC. We have made it easy for members to make donations on a regular basis. If you wish to help the NBC in this way, please e-mail ✉ secretary@neotropicalbirdclub.org for details.

NEW FIELD GUIDE, DUE SUMMER 2019!



Birds of the West Indies

By Guy M. Kirwan, Anthony Levesque, Mark Oberle and Christopher J. Sharpe

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Editorial Guidelines

The Neotropical Bird Club's magazine *Neotropical Birding*, published twice per year, provides a forum for articles on identification, birding sites and other information expected to be of use or interest to birders living in or visiting the Neotropics. We take pride in publishing good-quality images of rarely photographed species, and authors should take care to provide suitable digital files.

Contributions should be in English and are considered by the Editor and an Editorial Committee, and accepted subject to editing. All contributions or enquiries should be sent by e-mail to neotropical.birding@neotropicalbirdclub.org

Guidelines for contributors

Articles should be written clearly. Vernacular and scientific names should appear together at the first mention of a species, following which English names should be used alone. Names should where possible follow those of the South American Checklist Committee (see SACC: www.museum.lsu.edu/~Remsen/SACCBaseline.html) or the American Ornithology Society (1998 and subsequent updates; for Middle American and Caribbean birds). References should be cited in alphabetical order at the end of the paper in the same style as the current edition of *Neotropical Birding*. Internet sites/pages and unpublished reports are acceptable as references, but should only be cited *in extremis*.

Graphics files should be sent by e-mail. Please note that the editors reserve the right to reject any submissions that do not conform to the guidelines presented here. All contributions may be subject to peer review by one or more independent referees. The Senior Editor/Editorial Committee reserve the right to make changes that they deem necessary, and, in the minimum of cases, without prior reference to the author. Maps are welcome, but we cannot accept copyrighted material. It is assumed that all contributors submitting material understand and accept these conditions.

Articles can be submitted at any time and will be published as soon as possible following acceptance by the Senior Editor.

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