

The first records of Red-fronted Coot (*Fulica rufifrons*) in Bolivia, and other notes on bolivian bird distribution

LOS PRIMEROS REGISTROS DE *FULICA RUFIFRONS* EN BOLIVIA, Y OTRAS NOTAS SOBRE DISTRIBUCION DE AVES EN BOLIVIA

Peter A. Hosner¹, Kenneth D. Behrens² & Noemi E. Huanca-Llanos³

¹Ecology and Evolutionary Biology, Division of Ornithology, University of Kansas Museum of Natural History Dyche Hall, 1345 Jayhawk Blvd, University of Kansas, Lawrence, KS 66046.
E-mail: hosner@ku.edu

²Tropical Birding, 1 Toucan Way, Bloubergrise 744, Cape Town, South Africa.
E-mail: Ken.Behrens@gmail.com

³Asociación Armonía, Avenida Lomas de Arena, Casilla 3566, Santa Cruz, Bolivia.
E-mail: Noemi_ehll@yahoo.com

Abstract

We present the first documented records of *Fulica rufifrons* from Bolivia. Also, we include distribution notes on 12 other species, including 11 first department records from various localities in the departments of La Paz, Oruro, Beni, Cochabamba, and Santa Cruz. Most records are documented with sound recordings or photographs. Multiple experienced observers also independently identified most sightings.

Keywords: bird distributions, Bolivia, *Fulica rufifrons*, Neotropics, South America.

Resumen

Presentamos los primeros registros de *Fulica rufifrons* para Bolivia. También, incluimos notas sobre la distribución de otras 12 especies, incluyendo 11 primeros registros para los departamentos de La Paz, Oruro, Beni, Cochabamba y Santa Cruz. La mayoría de los registros son documentados con grabaciones de sonidos, fotografías o observaciones por mas de una persona.

Palabras claves: Bolivia, distribución de aves, *Fulica rufifrons*, Neotropico, Suramérica.

Introduction

The known avifauna of Bolivia has grown immensely over the past 30 years (i.e. Hennessey *et al.* 2003, Parker & Remsen 1987, Remsen & Traylor 1989, Tobias & Seddon 2007). We visited various localities throughout Bolivia and present noteworthy distribution records on 13 species, including the first Bolivian records of *Fulica rufifrons*, the Red-fronted Coot (Hennessey *et al.* 2003). Another 11 records are new departmental records based on Hennessey *et al.* (2003), and a slight range extension in the department of Beni for *Elaenia cristata*, which has very recently been noted in the northern parts of the department (Tobias & Seddon 2007). Details about our observations, supporting evidence, and localities are provided within the species accounts. Taxonomy follows the American

Ornithologists' Union South American Checklist Committee (Remsen *et al.* 2008). Recordings were made by PAH with a Sennheisser MKH-20 microphone in a Telinga Parabola with a Marantz PMD 660 solid-state recorder, and are archived at the Macaulay Library of Natural Sounds (MLNS) at Cornell University. Catalog numbers for recordings documenting sightings are given in the species accounts. Latitude, Longitude and elevation were obtained in the field with a Garmin Etrex Vista GPS unit with pressure based altimeter, and checked with Google Earth 4.3 beta Free Version (Google 2008). Initials of observers follow species accounts (Kenneth D. Behrens, Peter A. Hosner, Evan W. Obercian, Noemi Huanca-Llanos).

Species accounts

***Pardirallus maculatus*, Spotted Rail** – A single bird was flushed and seen well in tall seasonally flooded reed marsh near Santa Rosa, Beni (14° 4'25''S, 66° 49'36''W; 160m), on 23 September 2006. This species is widespread but local, and has recently been found in La Paz, Chuquisaca, and Tarija (Hennessey *et al.* 2003), which suggests that it is widespread though lowland wetlands in Bolivia. This is the first record for the species in Dept. Beni. (PAH).

***Laterallus viridis*, Russet-crowned Crake** – Common in seasonally flooded marsh, scrubby wet pampas bordering forest, drainage ditches, and similar habitats around Ixiamas, La Paz (13° 47'33''S, 68° 07'16''W, 260m), on 21 February 2007. This species has also recently been found to be common in Pando (Tobias & Seddon 2007) as well as Beni and Santa Cruz (Hennessey *et al.* 2003). Songs of several pairs were heard, and were identified based on recordings from Lysinger *et al.* (2005). Upon playback of the recordings from Lysinger *et al.* (2005), the birds approached and gave agitated calls, but were never actually seen. The birds did not respond to songs presented of any of the other *Laterallus* species known from Bolivia. Parker and Bailey (1991) did not note *L. viridis* around Ixiamas in their brief visit, this is the first record of this species in Dept. La Paz. (KDB, PAH).

***Gallinula melanops*, Spot-flanked Gallinule** – A single adult seen foraging in aquatic vegetation at Laguna Alalay in Cochabamba (17° 24'25''S, 66° 08'26''W) at 2600m on 29 January 2007 in association with *Fulica ardesiaca*. Previous records for Bolivia were of austral migrants in the lowlands of Tarija and Santa Cruz below 500m (Hennessey *et al.* 2003). However, like *Fulica rufifrons*, this bird was present in the austral summer. It may have been a wanderer utilizing wetlands created by the unusually strong El Niño rains of 2007. This sighting is the first record for Dept. Cochabamba and the Andes in Bolivia. (KDB, PAH).

***Fulica rufifrons*, Red-fronted Coot** – Up to three individuals (Fig. 1 & 2) on Laguna Alalay, Cochabamba (17° 24'25''S, 66° 08'26''W), from 25 December 2006

through 29 January 2007. Though this species is an austral migrant, and not unexpected in Bolivia, the birds were present during the austral summer, and were perhaps wanderers following the strong El Niño rains. There were also a few reports by birdwatchers in the months preceding our visits (A.B. Hennessey, pers. com.), but we were unable to contact the observers for details on their sightings. The birds seemed to favor very shallow marsh near reedbeds, and were always associating with *Fulica ardesiaca*. This is the first documented record in Bolivia (Hennessey *et al.* 2003). (KDB, PAH, NHL).

***Actitis macularia*, Spotted Sandpiper** – Two seen along a stream running through boggy vegetation, in Parque Nacional Sajama, Oruro, 4200m (18° 4'57''S, 69° 2' 59''W), on 6 March 2007. This represents a first record for the altiplano in Bolivia, as well as for Dept. Oruro and Parque Nacional Sajama (Hennessey *et al.* 2003). Perhaps these birds were north-bound migrants. (KDB, PAH, EWO).

***Coccyzus erythrophthalmus*, Black-billed Cuckoo** – One adult seen well near Loreto, Beni (15° 15'56''S, 64° 46'04''W, 165m), on 16 January 2007. A second was seen in Apolo, Dept. La Paz (14° 43'07''W, 68° 29'50'', 1500m), on 7 February 2007. There are very few records of this species Bolivia, as it is generally uncommon, secretive and difficult to observe when not singing. Both individuals were observed in similar habitat: the brushy edge of small forest patches in savanna dominated areas. Our sighting is a first record for Dept. Beni (there is one previous sighting from higher elevations in the Andes at 2600m (Hennessey *et al.* 2003). (KDB, PAH, EWO).

***Elaenia cristata*, Plain-crested Elaenia** – Several encountered and recorded (LNS# 132748) in cerrado-like pampas habitats just north of Santa Rosa, in southern Beni (14° 4'25''S, 66° 49'36''W; 160m) on 21-22 September 2007. Until recently this species was only known from disjunct records in La Paz and Santa Cruz (Hennessey *et al.* 2003), but Tobias & Seddon (2007) found it to be common at two sites in *cerrado* in the northern part of the Beni. Tobias & Seddon (2007) hypothesized that the species is widespread in appropriate habitat in northern Bolivia, and this record begins to confirm that evaluation. (PAH).



Figure 1. A *Fulica rufifrons* on Laguna Alalay, 26 December 2006 (Photo: PAH).



Figure 2. Close up of a *Fulica rufifrons*. Note the peaked crown and the small, decurved bill with a red base, and white undertail coverts. These characters separate the species from other South American *Fulica* (Photo: PAH).

***Contopus sordidulus*, Western Wood-Pewee** – Commonly seen and heard (identification based on voice) in foothill forest at Los Volcanes Lodge on the southern edge of Parque Nacional Amboro, Dept. Santa Cruz (18° 06'16'', 63° 35'66''W 1030m), 22-24 January 2007. Voice a burry, descending *preeerr*, slightly burrier

than *Contopus virens*. Probably a common winter resident, as it is in La Paz and Beni, but overlooked in Santa Cruz. This is the first record for Dept. Santa Cruz (Hennessey *et al.* 2003). (KDB, PAH).

***Contopus virens*, Eastern Wood-Pewee** – Commonly seen and recorded by voice (identification based on voice, LNS# 132550) in foothill forest at Los Volcanes Lodge, Santa Cruz (18° 06'16", 63° 35'66" W 1030m), from 22-24 January 2007. Voice a descending clean *peeyur*, cleaner than *Contopus sordidulus*. These are the first records for Dept. Santa Cruz (Hennessey *et al.* 2003). Like the previous species, it is probably widespread but overlooked in Santa Cruz, and a first record for the Dept. (KDB, PAH).

***Progne elegans*, Southern Martin** – Common at the Armonia Red-fronted Macaw Lodge, Cochabamba (18° 08'08" E, 69° 49'43" W, 1500m), from 19-21 January 2007, and appears to breed at this site. Previously unrecorded in Dept. Cochabamba, and there is no confirmed breeding in Bolivia (Hennessey *et al.* 2003). However, the species is a common breeder in similar areas of arid rain shadow canyons in Salta, Argentina (PAH pers. obs.). Male flight song recorded (LNS # 132532). Individuals were observed investigating holes in the cliff faces, apparently for breeding, though the inaccessibility of the possible nest sites prevented further study (KDB, PAH).

***Sporophila leucoptera*, White-bellied Seedeater** – Two singing males seen well in small savannah patches outside of Ixiamas, La Paz (13° 47'33" S, 68° 07'16" W, 260m), on 21 February 2007. This species was not noted by Parker & Bailey (1991) in their brief visit to Ixiamas, but is common in savanna in nearby Beni (*i.e.* Brace *et al.* 1997, PAH pers. obs.), and there are two recent records for adjacent Madre de Dios, Peru (Schulenberg *et al.* 2007, J. Tobias pers. comm.). Perhaps it has been previously overlooked, expanded its slightly with deforestation along the Rurrenabaque/Ixiamas road, or is a seasonal visitor. This is the first record of this species in Dept. La Paz (Hennessey *et al.* 2003). (KDB, PAH).

***Sporophila hypoxantha*, Tawny-bellied Seedeater** – Abundant around Ixiamas (13° 47'33" S, 68° 07'16" W, 260m) on 21 February 2007. It was the most common *Sporophila*, and there were flocks of up to 20 individuals in savanna edge at the outskirts of town. Like the previous species, this species occurs in savanna in nearby Beni (*i.e.* Brace *et al.* 1997), and is an occasional visitor to adjacent Madres de Dios, Peru (Schulenberg *et al.* 2007). Like *S. leucoptera*, this species was not noted in a brief visit to Ixiamas by Parker & Bailey (1991), and perhaps it too was either overlooked, has expanded slightly with deforestation along the Rurrenabaque/Ixiamas road, or is a seasonal visitor. This is the first Dept. La Paz record (Hennessey *et al.* 2003). (KDB, PAH).

***Sturnella superciliaris*, White-browed Meadowlark** – Single male seen repeatedly in a bog at 4400m in PN Sajama, 2km from the Chilean Border (18° 4'57" S, 69° 2' 59" W), on 7 March 2007. This bird appears to have been a true vagrant, but its presence was not completely unprecedented; the single Chilean record of this species from Baños de Toro (Jaramillo 2003) clearly must have crossed the Andes, and there is one previous record from above 4000m in Cochabamba (Hennessey *et al.* 2003). This sighting is the first record for Dept. Oruro and Parque Nacional Sajama. (KDB, PAH, EWO).

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the Macaulay Library of Natural Sounds (LNS) for loaning recording equipment and archiving material. Recordings in the paper can be listened to online at www.animalbehaviorarchive.org. We would also like to thank A. Bennett Hennessey, Sebastian Herzog, and the Huanca-Llanos family for comments, information and support during our time in Bolivia. Joe Tobias gave some useful comments about status and distribution of various species.

Literature cited

Brace, R. C., Hornbuckle, J., & J. W. Pearch-Higgins. 1997. The avifauna of the Beni Biological station. Bird Conservation International 7: 117-159

Hennessey, A. B., Herzog, S. K. & F. Sagot. 2003. An annotated list of the birds of Bolivia. Fifth edition. Asociación Armonía, Santa Cruz de la Sierra.

Jaramillo, A. 2003. The birds of Chile. Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey.

Parker, T. A. & B. Bailey. 1991. A biological assessment of the Alto Madidi region and adjacent areas of Northwest

Bolivia, May 18-June 15, 1990. RAP Working Pap. 1, CI, Washington, D.C.

Lysinger, M., Moore, J. V., Krabbe, N., Coopmans, P., Lane, D.F., Navarrete, L., Nilsson, J. & R. S. Ridgely. 2005. The Birds of Eastern Ecuador Volume I: The Foothills and Lower Subtropics. John V. Moore Nature Recordings, San Jose, California.

Parker, T. A. & J. V. Remsen. 1987. Fifty-two Amazonian bird species new to Bolivia. Bulletin of the British Ornithologists Club 107: 94–107.

Remsen, J. V., Jaramillo, A., Nores, M., Pacheco, J. F., Robbins, M. B., Schulenberg, T. S., Stiles, F. G., da Silva, J. M. C., Stotz, D. F. & K. J. Zimmer. 2008 (*June 2008*). A classification of the bird species of South America. www.museum.lsu.edu/~Remsen/SACCBaseline.html

Remsen, J. V. & M. A. Traylor. 1989. An annotated list of the birds of Bolivia. Buteo Books, Vermillion, South Dakota.

Schulenberg, T. S., Stotz, D. F., Lane, D.F., O’neill, J. P. & T. A. Parker. 2007. Birds of Peru. Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey.

Tobias, J. A. & N. Seddon. 2007. Nine bird species new to Bolivia and notes on other significant records. Bulletin of the British Ornithologists Club 127: 49-84.