

New record of Austral Rail *Rallus antarcticus* in Argentina

Austral Rail *Rallus antarcticus* is one of the least-known New World railbirds, being known from just c.20 localities, principally in Argentine and Chilean Patagonia^{3,4,6}. Seven specimens are available from Argentina, but just three of these were collected post-1901^{4,5}. Between 1959 and the species' rediscovery in 1998 there were no definite records, and its vocalisation was recorded first in 1998⁴. *R. antarcticus* was categorised by Collar *et al.*³ as Endangered / Extinct but, following its rediscovery, the species was downlisted to Vulnerable¹. Recently, Pugnali *et al.*⁶ published four new localities, one in the Falklands (a vagrant), two in Chubut and one in Santa Cruz.

A specimen, now held at the Museo de La Plata, La Plata (MLP 13994), was salvaged in February 2004 on a road just a few metres from the Atlantic Ocean, near San Antonio Oeste, prov. Río Negro, Argentina (40°43'S 64°57'W). This is the second record for the province, and the first since 1959. The record is also the north-easternmost in Patagonia.

The bird is a female in adult plumage but not in breeding condition. Its plumage matches the literature². Mensural and other data are as follows: total length

200 mm, wing-chord 90 mm, tarsus 28.6 mm, culmen 34.6 mm, weight 51 g; irides red, bill dark dun-coloured with a red mandible, legs reddish; ovary inactive (10.3 mm).

To date, *R. antarcticus* has been found at 13 Argentine localities, ten in Patagonia, and mainly in October–March, with three old citations for Buenos Aires in autumn/winter. That it has been found in Patagonia mainly in the breeding season and in Buenos Aires in the non-breeding season has led some authors to postulate that the species performs more or less regular migrations^{4,5}. The specimen reported here might also have been a migrant, though further research is needed to shed light on this issue.

References

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