

First record of *Phrygilus fruticeti coracinus* in Peru

During the wet seasons of 2006 (29 November–1 December) and 2008 (24 November–13 December) between 06h00 to 08h00 on sunny days, we recorded lone male Mourning Sierra Finches *Phrygilus fruticeti* of the race *coracinus* at two localities, Tripartito (17°29'S 69°28'W; 4,094 m) and Ayro (17°34'S 69°37'W; 4,243 m), in dpto. Tacna, Peru. Both localities lie close to the junction of the Peru / Chile / Bolivia borders. The sierra finches were observed flocking with Bright-rumped Yellow Finch *Sicalis uropygialis* and Black-hooded Sierra Finch *Phrygilus atriceps*. We documented our observations with photographs (Fig. 1). Both sites are dominated by typical highland *pajonal* or grassland (*Stipa* spp.) and *tolar* (*Parastrephia* sp.) vegetation, but most of the finches we recorded were close to settlements. Further surveys were made monthly, in January–September 2009, but no more *P. f. coracinus* were recorded.

Our observations are the first confirmed record of *P. f. coracinus* in Peru and the northernmost record of the subspecies. In addition they also confirm the presence in Peru of two of the three subspecies of *P. fruticeti*, although *P. f. peruvianus* has been considered a weakly defined race and *coracinus* exhibits some intergradation with nominate *fruticeti*¹. Previously, *P. f. coracinus* was known from the altiplano of Bolivia west from Lake Poopó, Oruro, and Uyuni, Potosí, to the Chilean border (Sajama and Pampa Olliaga in Oruro, Sacaya in Tarapacá), and had also been recorded at Isluga and Visviri in northern Chile^{1–3}. No other subspecies of *P. fruticeti* permanently inhabit this area, which might indicate that their presence is due to the seasonal availability of some resource, but further evidence is required. Fjeldsá¹ suggested that, in some localities, the species could be only a visitor from higher altitudes, which would suggest migratory behaviour. Other Emberizidae were recorded regularly in



Figure 1. Mourning Sierra Finch *Phrygilus fruticeti coracinus* (left bird), Ayro, dpto. Tacna, Peru, 13 December 2008 (Nataly Hidalgo-Aranzamendi)

our study area such as *Sicalis uropygialis*, *Phrygilus atriceps*, Ash-breasted Sierra Finch *P. plebejus* and White-winged Diuca Finch *Diuca speculifera*. Unexpectedly, the majority of our observations were made around habitation. Typically *P. f. coracinus* inhabits bushy or rocky slopes with some brush, in arid and semi-arid regions, or pumice slopes with *Polylepis* shrub at much higher elevations, rarely in open grasslands unless bordered by shrubby vegetation^{1,2}. Our observations might further indicate that the species undertakes as yet undocumented seasonal movements and that the birds we recorded were opportunistically exploiting regional (seasonal) resources.

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