
The first Southern Lapwing *Vanellus chilensis* in Mexico

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Un *Vanellus chilensis* adulto, aparentemente de la raza norteña *cayennensis*, fue encontrado en los bañados Usumacinta, sobre la ruta 186 en Campeche, México el 3 diciembre 1996, constituyendo el primer registro para el país. Fue observado nuevamente en el mismo lugar el 7 diciembre y 13 febrero 1997, cuando fue fotografiado. La raza *cayennensis* reside en gran parte de las llanuras sudamericanas al norte del Amazonas. Si bien es mayormente sedentario, se conocen ciertos movimientos pos-nidificatorios. Individuos vagantes han alcanzado las Islas Malvinas, Trinidad y más recientemente Costa Rica. Es tomado como poco común o raro en Panamá, aunque aparentemente aumentando y dispersándose al oeste, lo que sugiere que puedan haber nuevos registros en México.

Introduction

On 3 December 1996, JPM and Janette Martin, and Mark, Richard and Linda Sutton were birding at Usumacinta Marshes along highway 186 in Campeche, Mexico. Our last stop was at a pool at km 174.5 which held large numbers of waders and ducks. While looking at two drake Cinnamon Teal *Anas cyanoptera*, JPM noticed a large plover which he recognised as a Southern Lapwing *Vanellus chilensis*, having seen the species on TV. This was swiftly confirmed by MS who had seen the species in Venezuela. With increasing excitement, we noted that Southern Lapwing was not mentioned in Howell & Webb² and notes were taken on what appeared to be a first Mexican record. The bird was watched for c. 30 minutes during which time it was largely resting.

Subsequently, on the evening of 4 December, we met Steve Howell (SNGH) on Cozumel. He was able to alter his travel plans and saw the bird at the same site on the morning of 7 December. It was seen again at the same site in late December (SNGH pers. comm.) and on 13 February 1997 by Andre van Kleunen, Jan-Joost Bouwman and Roland van der Vliet, who obtained some photographs.

Description

The following description is based on notes taken by JPM and SNGH.

Size and structure: a large long-legged plover; body size between American Avocet *Recurvirostra americana* and Black-necked Stilt *Himantopus mexicanus* (both nearby for comparison).

Head and underparts: head and neck greyish (SNGH) or greyish buff (JPM) with black forehead patch bordered white above, and black throat stripe with slightly indistinct lower border (SNGH), narrowly joined to black forehead across front of lores where edged white (JPM); eye sometimes appeared set in short dusky eyestripe, perhaps shadow (JPM); wispy bifurcate occipital crest; projecting part of crest black, continuing as a narrowly triangular grey smudge on hindcrown; black chest shield (separated from black throat stripe by grey foreneck) extending as two 'points' at sides, the upper 'point' shorter and blunter, the lower longer projecting over wing bend where it marked the break between grey nape and sandy olive grey-brown upperparts (SNGH); rest of underparts white.

Upperparts: olive sheen to grey-brown mantle and scapulars, plainer grey-brown wing-coverts and tertials; purple-copper-green shoulder patch (less extensive than birds in Chile (SNGH); blunt black primaries, extending beyond tertials and slightly beyond tail (SNGH); broad white leading edge to wings below carpal area; when preening and in flight (SNGH) showed black remiges and primary-coverts (possibly narrow pale fringes to outer primaries in flight), contrasting with white wedge broadest at carpal, and mostly grey-brown coverts (see sketch); wing pattern noticeably different from Chilean birds; tail, seen briefly in flight (SNGH), white with black subterminal band apparently extending to sides.

Underwing: black remiges contrasting with white wing linings; faint black mottling on lesser underwing-coverts and from edge of wing seen when preening (SNGH).

Bare parts: bill dull reddish pink with black tip; eye and orbital ring red; legs and feet reddish pink; spur red.

Behaviour: silent; fed by quick walks then stopped to bend and pick up prey in typical plover fashion; crouched close to ground when Jabiru *Jabiru mycteria* flew over, becoming very inconspicuous (SNGH).

Discussion

The bird was aged as an adult by the clear cut black and white face markings and lack of pale fringes to the upperparts. It was presumably of the northern race *cayennensis*. However, although Hayman *et al.*¹ describe *cayennensis* as the only race in which the black throat stripe is separated from the chest shield, the head is described as cinnamon-brown. The first of these features is perhaps easier to assess objectively, but the head

was noted as greyish or greyish buff on the Usumacinta bird.

The race *cayennensis* occupies most of lowland South America north of the Amazon, breeding from April-July with some post breeding dispersal, although it is considered largely sedentary. Southern races breed in the austral summer and are partial migrants, withdrawing from cooler areas in winter. Vagrants have reached the Falkland Islands, Trinidad¹ and, most recently, Costa Rica (SNGH pers. comm.). It is described as uncommon to rare in Panama, although apparently increasing and spreading west³, suggesting that further Mexican records may follow.

Acknowledgements

Thanks are due to Steve Howell for his field notes and useful comments on a first draft of this note, and to Andre van Kleunen, Jan-Joost Bouwman and Roland van der Vliet for their comments and for kindly supplying photographs of the bird.

References

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