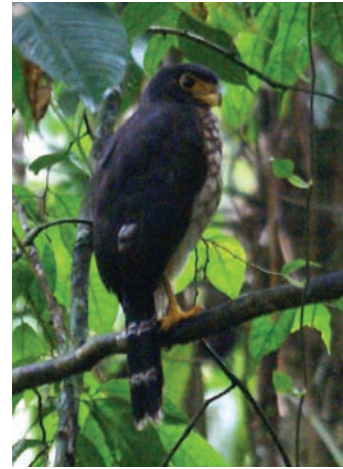


Slaty-backed Forest Falcon *Micrastur mirandollei* in north-west Ecuador

Slaty-backed Forest Falcon *Micrastur mirandollei* is rarely encountered but widespread in humid lowland forest from Costa Rica south to Brazil^{1,2}. For Ecuador, Ridgely & Greenfield⁵ noted confirmed records in the Amazonian lowlands and an unconfirmed record from the north-west. Documented reports from western Ecuador known to us are as follows: (1) a tape-recording considered probably of this species made near San Lorenzo, prov. Esmeraldas, on 23 February 1997, by J. Nilsson⁵; (2) a bird tape-recorded at Río Canandé, prov. Esmeraldas, on 12 September 2006, by P. Coopmans & J. Olah (pers. comm.); and (3) a report at Playa de Oro, prov. Esmeraldas, that requires confirmation, by O. Jahn⁴.

On 30 July 2010 we observed a Slaty-backed Forest Falcon at the start of the waterfall trail within the territory of the Playa de Oro community, prov. Esmeraldas, at c.150 m (00°51'N 78°44'W). The bird was calling from within primary forest characterised by an abundance of large trees reaching heights of c.30–40 m and sparse undergrowth. We sound-recorded it (www.xeno-canto.org; XC92172) and on playback the bird instantly flew towards us but we acquired only brief views. Shortly thereafter, we relocated it perched in a small tree c.4 m above ground. We approached it to c.8 m and obtained photographs (Figs. 1–2). The bird called persistently throughout the observation.

We identified it as a juvenile Slaty-backed Forest Falcon from the literature^{1–3,5}. It was a mid-sized *Micrastur* with uniform dark grey upperparts including face and neck, pale whitish underparts, with a scaly breast pattern of clear dark chevrons formed by dark brown feather fringes; uppertail dark with three narrow whitish bands and a narrow white tip; eye-ring, bill base and legs were yellow. Potential confusion species such as Bicoloured Hawk *Accipiter*



Figures 1–2. Juvenile Slaty-backed Forest Falcon *Micrastur mirandollei*, Playa de Oro, prov. Esmeraldas, Ecuador, 30 July 2010 (Dušan M. Brinkhuizen)

bicolor, Semiplumbeous Hawk *Leucopternis semiplumbeus* and three other *Micrastur* spp. known from Playa de Oro⁴ do not show a combination of scaled breast pattern with uniform grey upperparts^{2,3,5}. The vocalisation was rather plaintive, a rising series of c.10–13 nasal *aah* notes delivered continuously, somewhat reminiscent of Laughing Falcon *Herpotheres cachinnans*. Our recording supports the identification as Slaty-backed Forest Falcon. The bird's persistent calling from the lower forest strata suggests that its nest may have been nearby as is known for other juvenile *Micrastur* (U. Valdez pers. comm.).

Our record is the first photographed, and perhaps the first visual observation of Slaty-backed Forest Falcon in western Ecuador. The species is known from the Pacific lowlands of Colombia south to south-west Nariño³, and its occurrence in north-west Ecuador was therefore to be expected⁵.

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Dušan M. Brinkhuizen

Casilla Postal 17-07-9345,
Quito, Ecuador. E-mail:
d.m.brinkhuizen@gmail.com.

Bert de Bruin

Saedalsveien 69, 5099 Bergen,
Norway. E-mail: bedebe@gmail.com.

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