

## Field notes on the Giant Antpitta *Grallaria gigantea*

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Se presentan nuevas observaciones de *Grallaria gigantea* del sudoeste Colombiano y noroeste de Ecuador. Dos registros visuales, de subespecie desconocida, fueron efectuados en la Reserva La Planada, Depto. Nariño, Colombia en 1988 y 1989, y uno, de la subespecie *hylodroma*, fue atrapado en Mindo, provincia de Pichincha, Ecuador en 1994. Se presenta la biometría de este individuo y se describe el comportamiento alimentar de otros observados en el campo, en Mindo. Aparentemente se alimentaban de lombrices *Rhynodrylus* y otros invertebrados. Hasta 3–4 *G. gigantea* fueron escuchados en el área de Mindo en noviembre–diciembre 1994.

The Giant Antpitta *Grallaria gigantea* is reported to inhabit forests of the Andean slopes of Ecuador and southernmost Colombia. Three subspecies are recognised: Colombian *lehmanni*, west Ecuadorian *hylodroma* and east Ecuadorian nominate *gigantea*<sup>3</sup>, with given localities separated by large distances. Most information available on biology and distribution of this rarely encountered bird is presented by Collar *et al.*<sup>1</sup> and Krabbe *et al.*<sup>3</sup>. The conservation status of the species was ranked as Vulnerable by Collar *et al.*<sup>2</sup>. In this note we present additional information and the first photograph taken of the species in the wild.

Two sight records of *Grallaria gigantea* (subspecies uncertain) were made at 1,800 m, in the montane forest of La Planada Reserve, Nariño Department, Colombia (00°54'N 77°16'W) in 1988 (by Hinkelmann and KLS) and 1989 (by KLS), extending the known range to the Pacific slope of Colombia. To date, only two localities on the eastern slope of the southern Central Andes have been confirmed for the Colombian subspecies *lehmanni*: San Marcos (3,000 m) and Tijeras (2,300 m), both in Moscopán region, Cauca Department; a previous record in the West Andes (Cerro Munchique, Cauca Department)<sup>1</sup>, was based on a misidentified specimen of Undulated Antpitta *Grallaria squamigera*<sup>3</sup>.

In 1994, a *Grallaria gigantea hylodroma* was captured and released by YdS during a mist-netting study at Mindo, Pichincha Province, north-west Ecuador. The netting site (00°03'S 78°44'W) was in the understorey of primary wet premontane forest at 1,960 m, confirming the habitat requirements of the species given in Krabbe *et al.*<sup>3</sup>. Measurements of the trapped individual of unknown sex were: weight 254 g; wing length 165 mm; tail length 80 mm; bill length 32.7 mm; bill width at base 14.8 mm; bill tip to distal edge of nostril 25.5 mm; bill width at nostril 11.6 mm. The

recorded weight does not confirm the statement by Krabbe *et al.*<sup>3</sup> that "*gigantea* differs from *hylodroma* by its larger size", with their two specimens weighing 266 g and 218 g. Their sample was evidently too small to distinguish subspecific differences.

Both at La Planada and near Mindo, foraging individuals of *Grallaria gigantea* were observed on several occasions. At La Planada, a bird was seen along a trail feeding on slugs. At the study site in north-west Ecuador, one was found foraging on pasture surrounded by slightly disturbed forest, apparently feeding on invertebrates in the grassy vegetation. Another bird was repeatedly observed foraging along an open muddy trail amidst primary and slightly disturbed forest. It was pounding its heavy beak into the soil with repeated sudden sharp thrusts. As giant earthworms *Rhynodrylus* were found dead on the trail on two occasions (body lengths up to 160 cm), with segments bitten off neatly, we assume this was the technique employed by the bird to deal with this prey (see<sup>3</sup>). Foraging activity at the two sites lasted from at least 30 min before dawn to 30 min after dusk. At Mindo, most observations occurred in the afternoon, and as early as 14h00 during foggy weather. We therefore conclude that foraging may occur throughout daylight hours.

In the vicinity of the Mindo study site, in November/December 1994, 3–4 *Grallaria gigantea* were consistently heard singing from 05h45 to 06h05, prior to the early dawn chorus. Further irregular singing was noted later in the mornings. The density of singing individuals in this area of moderately sloping submontane forest was estimated to be c.1–1.5/ha, based on monitoring the number of simultaneously singing birds, combined with our knowledge of retrapping of marked individuals.



Giant Antpitta *Grallaria gigantea hylodroma*, mist-netted in submontane wet forest near Mindo, Pichincha Province, north-west Ecuador, at 1,960 m (Yves de Soye).

### References

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