

An inventory of the birds of Segua Marsh, Manabí, Ecuador

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Dentro del marco de las políticas de acción del Programa de Manejo de Recursos Costeros se encuentra declarar al humedal La Ciénaga de La Segua (1.742 ha), Manabí, Ecuador, como sitio oficial Ramsar. Los autores realizaron un inventario, listado comentado y cuantificación de la población de aves del lugar, incluyendo en esta nota el listado de aves (156 especies), comentarios de 13 especies raras o con problemas de conservación, y presentando una nueva especie para Ecuador: la Polluela Pechiamarilla *Porzana flaviventer*. El sitio funciona como refugio de aves acuáticas (el 44% de las especies inventariadas) siendo de importancia vital en la estación seca.

Introduction

A proposal prepared by the Programa de Manejo de Recursos Costeros (hereafter PMRC) for the environmental management of Segua Marsh states its decision to undertake studies necessary for the Ecuadorian government to declare the marsh a Ramsar site¹. Given that the Ramsar Convention is the principal inter-governmental forum for the promotion of international cooperation for the conservation of wetlands, this declaration should increase the possibility of obtaining funds and international technical assistance for the sustainable development of this area. For this reason, a series of visits were made to the area in October 1996–April 1997 to produce an annotated list of the birds that use the marsh and their numbers. The full results of this work were included in a report to PMRC² that recommended declaration as a Ramsar site.

Methods

Ornithologists first visited this marsh in 1993 and 1995^{13,15}. Subsequently, the area has been included in two site guides promoting ecotourism^{9,14}, and has been visited by a number of birdwatchers who have prepared unpublished lists of species observed at the site. In the present study, six visits of 10 days each were planned to cover both the dry and wet seasons, to monitor the arrival and departure of migrants, the presence and absence of resident species at different times of year, and reproductive behaviour, as well as to quantify species abundances via sampling quadrats. The species included were identified via direct observation, photographs, sound recordings, published lists or unpublished sightings by competent observers.

Study site

Segua Marsh covers 1,742 ha¹³, at the confluence of the Carrizal and Chone rivers, in Manabí province, Ecuador. The Carrizal river and the roads from Bahía de Caráquez and Portoviejo meet at the village of San Antonio and form the limits of this permanent marsh and peripheral areas that are temporarily flooded during the rainy season, in

December–April. The area is surrounded by low hills that are farmed and grazed. The marsh originally formed part of the Chone river estuary and was covered by mangroves but, as the watershed was deforested, the mouth of the Chone river silted, blocking the entry of tidal waters but permitting the river to enter the sea. The salinity of the water in Segua decreased and local mangroves died and were logged. At present, there are large areas of standing fresh water with abundant floating vegetation (*Eichornia* sp. Pontedereacea) surrounded by rice fields, pastures, and brushland (Figs. 1 & 2). Our report to PMRC² includes a more detailed description of the area.

Results

This annotated list of the birds of Segua marsh includes a discussion of rare and threatened species, together with details of the first Ecuadorian record of Yellow-breasted Crake *Porzana flaviventer*. The inventory is principally based on our records from visits on 4–5 October 1996, 22 October–3 November 1996, 21–30 November 1996, 26 December 1996–2 January 1997, 27 February–7 March 1997, 12–23 April 1997 and 10–18 May 1997, together with other supplementary data (see Introduction). In this area, the dry season is in October–December and the rains in February–April. A total of 156 species, of 46 families (30 non-passerines and 17 strictly aquatic), were recorded. A total of 44% of the species encountered were aquatic or associated with flooded habitats. The following notes refer to the most important records.

Southern Pochard *Netta erythrophthalma*

A group of at least 14 (approximately equal numbers of males and females) was observed on 30 October 1996, dispersed across a patch of open water with numerous floating plants (*Eichornia* sp.). The next day, 20 were seen in nearby flooded rice fields, frequently flushing due to human disturbance. The only other sighting during the fieldwork was a male on 21 November 1996. The species has previously been recorded here, on 28 August 1995³, and in the general area¹³ (M. Jácome pers. comm.). There are

few records in Ecuador and it is considered 'very rare'¹¹ and 'critically endangered'⁷ in the country.

Moscovy Duck *Cairina moschata*

One was seen in November 1981 by F. Man Ging (pers. comm.) and another on 28 August 1995³. This species is considered rare¹¹ in Ecuador.

Rufescent Tiger-heron *Tigrisoma lineatum*

One adult on 29 December 1996. There are previous records at Segua^{2,6}. This species is considered rare¹¹ in western Ecuador.

Least Bittern *Ixobrychus exilis*

Observed 2–5 times during each visit. Always associated with dense clumps of floating vegetation (*Eichornia* sp.). This species is considered rare¹¹ in Ecuador.

Pinnated Bittern *Botaurus pinnatus*

Common in October 1996 (c.15), but only 2–5 during other visits. Always associated with dense clumps of floating vegetation (*Eichornia* sp.). Previously recorded at Segua^{3,6}. This species is considered rare¹¹ in Ecuador.

Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus*

Solitary or in groups of up to four, with a flock of 35 on 31 December 1996. Present on all visits, probably the same birds. Relatively common in April 1997, with a flock of seven seen. Identification was based on soft-part coloration: bill greyish horn, legs greyish horn to slate-grey, bare skin at base of bill slate-grey, iris reddish. This species is 'very rare'¹¹ in Ecuador.

Merlin *Falco columbarius*

Observed twice during each visit, except in December. This species is 'rare'¹¹ in Ecuador.

Clapper Rail *Rallus longirostris*

The only record is by Granizo⁶, who found three in February 1993. The species is associated with flooded, low-lying tidal areas, usually mangroves. Its presence in freshwater habitat is remarkable, although M. Cheek and BLL found six at Fincacua shrimp ponds, c.20 km west of Guayaquil, on 20 December 1997. Although these were indirectly associated with mangroves, via supply canals to the shrimp ponds, it appears that the species does utilise open areas such as those at Segua. It is worth remarking that, until a few years ago, Segua consisted of mangrove (see Study site) and the highest tides still reach within c.2 km of the marsh. There are very few records of this species, which is considered 'vulnerable to extinction'⁷ and 'very rare'¹¹ in Ecuador.

Sora *Porzana carolina*

One on 27 February 1997. Considered rare¹¹ in Ecuador.

Yellow-breasted Crake *Porzana flaviventer*

Seen twice, on 23 November 1996 and 27 February 1997, in clumps of floating vegetation (*Eichornia* sp.). In both cases, the bird was walking on floating vegetation, permitting brief views before it flew. Identification was based on its distinct plumage: crown and eye-lines black, whitish superciliary line, yellowish underparts (and feet), brown back mottled with whitish and cinnamon, white flanks with blackish bars. This is the first record in Ecuador and anywhere west of the Andes¹². Included in Ridgely *et al.*¹¹ and Ridgely & Greenfield¹⁰ on the basis of these sightings.

Sungrebe *Heliornis fulica*

Heard by BLL on 27 October 1996 and 21 April 1997. Previously known from the area^{2,6}. The species is considered rare¹¹ in western Ecuador.

Red Knot *Calidris canutus*

One record, a group of 32 birds on 6 March 1997 flying over cultivated rice fields. A migrant in this area with no further records during the study period.

Grey-headed Gull *Larus cirrocephalus*

One on 28 February 1997. Among the many Laughing Gulls *Larus atricilla* present, it is probable that others could have gone unnoticed. The species has not previously been recorded this far north on the Ecuadorian coast (M. Robbins pers. comm.).

Red-masked Parakeet *Aratinga erythrogenys*

Commonly observed in November–December 1996 and March–April 1997, probably involving the same flock of c.20 birds, in cornfields at the edge of the marsh or flying over. The species is considered globally Near-threatened^{4,5} and vulnerable in Ecuador⁷.

Fork-tailed Flycatcher *Tyrannus savana*

Two to five seen in March–April 1997. The species is rare¹¹ in western Ecuador.

Saffron Siskin *Carduelis siemiradzkii*

A pair on 30 December 1996. The male's mantle was olivaceous-yellow, including the upper part of the nape, and lacked dark olive spotting. The birds perched in an isolated, leafless bush c.1 m-high, surrounded by floating vegetation (*Eichornia* sp.). A few minutes later, they flew to an extensive, 3 m-high scrub nearby. As this was the only record, it appears that a permanent population does not occur



Figures 1–2. Segua Marsh, Manabí, from the air (left) and ground level (B. López-Lanús)

in the area. The species is considered Vulnerable at national and global levels^{4,5,7}. This record is the first in Manabí province.

Conclusions

Segua Marsh is an important refuge for waterbirds, especially during the dry season⁹, and is therefore of vital importance for migrant and resident species. The presence of a number of species that are rare or threatened in Ecuador increases its importance. Yellow-breasted Crake is unknown elsewhere in Ecuador or west of the Andes. The presence of migrant Nearctic shorebirds further enhances the conservation value of the area and justifies its protection. This inventory and the report submitted to PMRC⁹ represent key information for the preparation of a management plan for the Segua Marsh by PMRC, the first step toward formal declaration as a Ramsar site. The report submitted to the PMRC⁸ is unique within the region and should be of particular interest to Ecuadorian and South American ornithology, as it furnishes details of the avifauna of a region of the country that is still little known.

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Appendix: Inventory of birds of Segua Marsh, Manabí, Ecuador

Taxonomy follows Ridgely et al.¹¹. Maximum totals are given for selected species, not included in the species accounts, in brackets.

FREGATIDAE

Fregata magnificens Frigate Magnífica, Magnificent Frigatebird

PHALACROCORACIDAE

Phalacrocorax brasilianus Cormorán Neotropical, Neotropic Cormorant

ANHINGIDAE

Anhinga anhinga Aninga, Anhinga

PELECANIDAE

Pelecanus occidentalis Pelicano Pardo, Brown Pelican

ANATIDAE

Dendrocygna bicolor Pato-Silbón Canelo, Fulvous Whistling-duck
Dendrocygna autumnalis Pato-Silbón Ventrinegro, Black-bellied Whistling-duck
Anas bahamensis Ánade Cariblanco, White-cheeked Pintail
Anas discors Cerceta Aliazul, Blue-winged Teal

Netta erythrophthalma Porrón Sureño, Southern Pochard
Cairina moschata Pato Real, Muscovy Duck
Oxyura dominica Pato Enmascarado, Masked Duck

ARDEIDAE

Ardea cocoi Garzón Cocoli, Cocoli Heron
Ardea alba Garceta Grande, Great Egret
Egretta thula Garceta Nivea, Snowy Egret
Egretta caerulea Garceta Azul, Little Blue Heron
Egretta tricolor Garceta Tricolor, Tricolored Heron
Butorides striatus Garcilla Estriada, Striated Heron
Bubulcus ibis Garceta Bueyera, Cattle Egret
Nycticorax nycticorax Garza-Nocturna Coroninegra, Black-crowned Night-heron
Nyctanassa violacea Garza-Nocturna Coroniamarilla, Yellow-crowned Night-heron
Tigrisoma lineatum Garza-Tigre Castaña, Rufescent Tiger-heron
Ixobrychus exilis Mirasol Menor, Least Bittern
Botaurus pinnatus Mirasol Pinado, Pinnated Bittern

THRESKIORNITHIDAE

Eudocimus albus Ibis Blanco, White Ibis
Plegadis falcinellus Ibis Bronceado, Glossy Ibis

CICONIIDAE

Mycteria americana Cigüeña Americana, Wood Stork

CATHARTIDAE

Coragyps atratus Gallinazo Negro, Black Vulture
Cathartes aura Gallinazo Cabecirrojo, Turkey Vulture

ACCIPITRIDAE

Pandion haliaetus Águila Pescadora, Osprey
Gampsonyx swainsonii Elanio Perla, Pearl Kite (two)
Rostrhamus sociabilis Elanio Caracolero, Snail Kite
Buteogallus meridionalis Gavilán Sabanero, Savanna Hawk
Buteogallus subtilis Gavilán Manglero, Mangrove Black-hawk
Parabuteo unicinctus Gavilán Alibayo, Harris' Hawk
Buteo magnirostris Gavilán Caminero, Roadside Hawk

FALCONIDAE

Caracara plancus Caracara Crestado, Crested Caracara
Herpetotheres cachinnans Halcón Reidor, Laughing Falcon
Falco columbarius Esmerejón, Merlin
Falco peregrinus Halcón Peregrino, Peregrine Falcon

RALLIDAE

Laterallus albigularis Polluela Goliblanca, White-throated Crake
Rallus longirostris Rascón Manglero, Clapper Rail
Aramides sp. rascón-montés, wood-rail sp.
Porzana carolina Sora, Sora
Porzana flaviventer Polluela Pechiamarilla, Yellow-breasted Crake
Porphyrula martinica Gallareta Púrpura, Purple Gallinule
Gallinula chloropus Gallareta Común, Common Gallinule

HELIORNITHIDAE

Heliornis fulica Ave-Sol Americano, Sungrebe

ARAMIDAE

Aramus guarana Carrao, Limpkin

JACANIDAE

Jacana jacana Jacana Carunculada, Wattled Jacana (60+)

SCOLOPACIDAE

Tringa melanoleuca Patiamarillo Mayor, Greater Yellowlegs (17)
Tringa flavipes Patiamarillo Menor, Lesser Yellowlegs (26)
Tringa solitaria Playero Solitario, Solitary Sandpiper (two)
Actitis macularia Playero Coleador, Spotted Sandpiper (seven)

Numenius phaeopus Zarapito Trinador, Whimbrel (13)
Arenaria interpres Vuelvepiedras Rojizo, Ruddy Turnstone (two)
Calidris canutus Playero Rojo, Red Knot (23)
Calidris pusilla Playero Semipalmado, Semipalmated Sandpiper (65)
Calidris mauri Playero Occidental, Western Sandpiper (58)
Calidris minutilla Playero Menudo, Least Sandpiper (56)
Calidris melanotos Playero Pectoral, Pectoral Sandpiper (nine)
Calidris himantopus Playero Tarsilargo, Stilt Sandpiper (19)
Limnodromus griseus Agujeta Piquicorto, Short-billed Dowitcher (seven)
Steganopus tricolor Falaropo Tricolor, Wilson's Phalarope (20)

RECURVIROSTRIDAE

Himantopus mexicanus Cigüeñuela Cuellinegra, Black-necked Stilt (17)

CHARADRIIDAE

Charadrius semipalmatus Chorlo Semipalmado, Semipalmated Plover (two)
Charadrius collaris Chorlo Collarejo, Collared Plover (14)
Charadrius vociferus Chorlo Tildio, Killdeer (five)

LARIDAE

Larus atricilla Gaviota Reidora, Laughing Gull
Larus cirrocephalus Gaviota Cabecigris, Grey-headed Gull
Larus pipixcan Gaviota de Franklin, Franklin's Gull (two)
Sterna nilotica Gaviotin Piquigrueso, Gull-billed Tern
Sterna hirundo Gaviotin Común, Common Tern

COLUMBIDAE

Columba cayennensis Paloma Ventripálida, Pale-vented Pigeon
Zenaida auriculata Tórtola Orejada, Eared Dove
Zenaida meloda Tórtola Melódica, West Peruvian Dove
Columbina buckleyi Tortolita Ecuatoriana, Ecuadorian Ground-dove
Columbina cruziana Tortolita Croante, Croaking Ground-dove
Leptotila verreauxi Paloma Apical, White-tipped Dove

PSITTACIDAE

Aratinga erythrogenys Perico Caretirrojo, Red-masked Parakeet
Forpus caelestis Periquito del Pacífico, Pacific Parrotlet

CUCULIDAE

Coccyzus melacoryphus Cuclillo Piquioscuro, Dark-billed Cuckoo
Playa cayana Cuco Ardilla, Squirrel Cuckoo
Crotophaga ani Garrapatero Piquiliso, Smooth-billed Ani
Crotophaga sulcirostris Garrapatero Piquiestriado, Groove-billed Ani
Tapera naevia Cuclillo Listado, Striped Cuckoo

TYTONIDAE

Tyto alba Lechuza Campanaria, Barn Owl

STRIGIDAE

Glaucidium peruanum Mochuelo del Pacífico, Pacific Pygmy-owl

NYCTIBIIDAE

Nyctibius griseus Nictibio Común, Common Potoo

CAPRIMULGIDAE

Chordeiles acutipennis Añapero Menor, Lesser Nighthawk
Nyctidromus albicollis Pauraque, Pauraque

APODIDAE

Streptoprocne zonaris Vencejo Cuelliblanco, White-collared Swift
Panyptila cayennensis Vencejo Tijereta Menor, Lesser Swallow-tailed Swift

TROCHILIDAE

Amazilia amazilia Amazilia Ventrirrufa Amazilia, Hummingbird

ALCEDINIDAE

Megaceryle torquata Martín Pescador Grande, Ringed Kingfisher
Chloroceryle americana Martín Pescador Verde, Green Kingfisher

PICIDAE

Picus rubiginosus Carpintero Olividorado, Golden-olive Woodpecker
Dryocopus lineatus Carpintero Lineado, Lineated Woodpecker
Veniliornis callonotus Carpinterito Dorsiescarlata, Scarlet-backed Woodpecker

FURNARIIDAE

Furnarius cinnamomeus Hornero del Pacífico, Pacific Hornero

DENDROCOLAPTIDAE

Lepidocolaptes souleyetti Trepatroncos Cabecirrayado, Streak-headed Woodcreeper

THAMNOPHILIDAE

Sakesphorus bernardi Batará Collarejo, Collared Antshrike
Pyrgilena leuconota Ojo-de-Fuego Dorsiblanco, White-backed Fire-eye

RHINOCRYPTIDAE

Melanopareia elegans Pecholuna Elegante, Elegant Crescentchest

TYRANNIDAE

Camptostoma obsoletum Tiranolete-Silbador Sureño, Southern Beardless-tyrannulet
Elaenia flavogaster Elaenia Penachuda, Yellow-bellied Elaenia
Euscarthmus meloryphus Tirano-Enano Frentileonado, Tawny-crowned Pygmy-tyrant
Lophotriccus pileatus Cimerillo Crestiescamado, Scale-crested Pygmy-tyrant
Todirostrum cinereum Espatulilla Común, Common Tody-flycatcher
Tolmomyias sulphurescens Picoancho Azufrado, Yellow-olive Flycatcher
Myiophobus fasciatus Mosquero Pechirrayado, Bran-colored Flycatcher
Pyrocephalus rubinus Mosquero Bermellón, Vermilion Flycatcher
Muscigralla brevicauda Tiranito Colicorto, Short-tailed Field-tyrant
Fluvicola nengeta Tirano-de-Ciénega, Masked Water-tyrant
Myiarchus phaeocephalus Copetón Coronitizado, Sooty-crowned Flycatcher
Megarynchus pitangua Mosquero Picudo, Boat-billed Flycatcher
Myiozetetes cayannensis Mosquero Alicastaño, Rusty-margined Flycatcher
Myiozetetes similis Mosquero Social, Social Flycatcher
Myiodynastes maculatus Mosquero Rayado, Streaked Flycatcher
Myiodynastes bairdii Mosquero de Baird, Baird's Flycatcher
Tyrannus savana Tijereta Sabanera, Fork-tailed Flycatcher
Tyrannus melancholicus Tirano Tropical, Tropical Kingbird
Tyrannus niveigularis Tirano Goliníveo, Snowy-throated Kingbird
Pachyrhamphus homochrous Cabezón Unicolor, One-coloured Becard

VIREONIDAE

Cyclarhis gujanensis Vireón Cejirrufo, Rufous-browed Peppershrike
Vireo olivaceus Vireo Ojirrojo, Red-eyed Vireo

MIMIDAE

Mimus longicaudatus Sinsonte Colilargo, Long-tailed Mockingbird

HIRUNDINIDAE

Progne chalybea Martín Pechigris, Gray-breasted Martin
Notiochelidon cyanoleuca Golondrina Azul y Blanca, Blue-and-white Swallow
Stelgidopteryx ruficollis Golondrina Alirrasposa Sureña, Southern Rough-winged Swallow

Riparia riparia Martín Ribereño, Bank Swallow
Hirundo rustica Golondrina Tijereta, Barn Swallow
Hirundo rufocollaris Golondrina Ruficollareja, Chestnut-collared Swallow

TROGLODYTIDAE

Campylorhynchus fasciatus Soterrey Ondeado, Fasciated Wren
Thryothorus superciliaris Soterrey Cejón, Superciliated Wren
Troglodytes musculus Soterrey-Criollo Sureño, Southern House Wren

POLIOPTILIDAE

Polioptila plumbea Perlita Tropical, Tropical Gnatcatcher

PARULIDAE

Parula pitayumi Parula Tropical, Tropical Parula
Dendroica aestiva (*D. petechia* group) Reinita Amarilla, Yellow Warbler
Geothlypis auricularis Antifacito Lorinegro, Black-lored Yellowthroat

THRAUPIDAE

Euphonia saturata Eufonia Coroninaranja, Orange-crowned Euphonia
Euphonia lanirostris Eufonia Piquigruesa, Thick-billed Euphonia
Thraupis episcopus Tangara Azuleja, Blue-grey Tanager

CARDINALIDAE

Saltator striatipectus Saltador Listado, Streaked Saltator
Pheucticus chrysogaster Picogrueso Amarillo, Sureño Southern Yellow-grosbeak
Cyanocopsa cyanoides Picogrueso Negriazulado, Blue-black Grosbeak

EMBERIZIDAE

Rhodospingus cruentus Pinzón Pechicarmesí, Crimson Finch-tanager
Volatinia jacarina Semillerito Negriazulado, Blue-black Grassquit
Sporophila aurita Espiguero Variable, Variable Seedeater
Sporophila peruviana Espiguero Pico de Loro, Parrot-billed Seedeater
Sporophila telasco Espiguero Gorjicastaño, Chestnut-throated Seedeater

ICTERIDAE

Molothrus bonariensis Vaquero Brilloso, Shiny Cowbird
Cacicus cela Cacique Lomiamarillo, Yellow-rumped Cacique
Dives warszewiczi Negro Matorralero, Scrub Blackbird
Quiscalus mexicanus Clarinero Coligrande, Great-tailed Grackle
Icterus mesomelas Oriol Coliamarillo, Yellow-tailed Oriole
Sturnella bellicosa Pastorero Peruano, Peruvian Meadowlark

FRINGILLIDAE

Carduelis siemiradzki Jilguero Azafranado, Saffron Siskin