

Notes on Chestnut-bellied Hummingbird *Amazilia castaneiventris*: a new record for Boyacá, Colombia

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Amazilia castaneiventris es una especie endémica de Colombia, amenazada de peligro de extinción, de la vertiente oeste del norte de la Cordillera Oriental y Serranía de San Lucas. Su hábitat al parecer es de arbustales y bordes de bosques en zonas semiáridas, lo cual se comprueba con la identificación de un ejemplar en Villa de Leyva, departamento de Boyacá, situada en una región semiárida. El individuo compartía el hábitat con *Amazilia tzacatl*. Villa de Leyva se encuentra a c.120 km de la localidad más al sur conocida para la especie, en el mismo altiplano boyacense. Este hábitat en términos generales no se encuentra amenazado, por lo cual la especie podría ser tanto localizada como desapercibida por falta de observaciones.

Introduction

Chestnut-bellied Hummingbird *Amazilia castaneiventris* is a Colombian endemic^{3,6} with a restricted distribution⁵ that occurs very sporadically on the western slope of the Cordillera Oriental and Serranía de San Lucas, at 850–2,045 m^{1,3}. It was formerly considered Vulnerable¹ and at present Endangered^{2,4}, with records from just five localities in the departments of Bolívar (Norosi: Serranía de San Lucas), Santander (Lebrija and Portugal), and Boyacá (Caseteja and Tipacoque)¹. A female was collected in 1977 from Tipacoque, with the last previous specimens from 1962 and 1963 in Santander¹.

Habitat

Its habitat preferences are very little known, with records from lower montane humid forest (foothills) and canyons with scrub and forest borders¹. Collar *et al.*¹ mention F. G. Stiles *in litt.*, who stated that the genera is characteristic of scrub and second growth, and Stiles⁶ subsequently reported that it occurs in 'semiarid zones on the western slope'. Collar *et al.*¹ stated that deforestation has progressively affected the flood plain and foothills of the middle and lower Magdalena valley since the 19th century, but noted that 'the reason for it having gone unrecorded for so long may not be attributable to habitat loss, but rather to a lack of observer coverage'.

Results

I searched for the species in the semi-arid zone around Villa de Leyva (05°38'N 73°34'W; c.2,200 m), Boyacá department, at first only identifying Rufous-tailed Hummingbird *Amazilia tzacatl* by their distinctive dingy greyish lower underparts. On the morning of 22 March 2000, I found an *A. castaneiventris* in an area of scrub and low trees (many exotics such as *Salix* sp. and *Eucalyptus* sp.) by a 1 m-wide stream, flanked by open clearings and weekend-house gardens on the edge of Villa de Leyva. It was observed in good light at 06h25 and I unequivocally noted the chestnut underparts, while the rest of the plumage was very similar to *A.*

tzacatl. The black bill was different from adult male *A. tzacatl*, which has a pinkish bill with a black tip (old females and juvenile males of *A. tzacatl* can have black upper mandibles; F. G. Stiles pers. comm.). Juvenile plumage was assessed from specimens (n=2) at Instituto de Ciencias Nacional, Universidad Nacional, Bogotá (lack of green throat and breast, with ill-defined greyish underparts), and due to the intensity of green on throat and breast, and chestnut belly and vent, the Villa de Leyva individual was considered an adult.

The bird was discovered shortly after I had noted two *A. tzacatl* in territorial conflict. Probably *A. castaneiventris* was also involved and by 06h40 only one *A. tzacatl* was present (the presumed territory holder, which dominated the area on subsequent visits at the same hour). The *A. castaneiventris* sheltered by a small stream, in a few shrubs c.3 m high, in a ravine with thickets and low trees 6–10 m high. No vocalisations were heard and its presence was brief. It departed the area before the second *A. tzacatl*. I searched the area that afternoon and the following two mornings without further sightings or mist-net captures. Blue-tailed *Chlorostilbon mellisugus* and Short-tailed Emeralds *C. poortmani*, which occur in similar habitats to *A. tzacatl*, were also identified in the same area.

Conclusions

Undoubtedly, Naranjo's¹ suspicion that the species prefers scrubby habitat and forest borders, and that of Stiles⁴ for semi-arid areas, coincide with my observations, which were in a semi-arid region. Villa de Leyva is c.120 km from Tipacoque, perhaps the previous southernmost locality, and has similar habitat to the Altiplano Boyacense. It is unknown whether the new sighting represents an isolated record or a local population. Also, the species' habitat does not appear particularly threatened. Systematic surveys for the species across the region should be undertaken to determine its status, ecological requirements and threats.

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