

The range of Bananal Antbird *Cercomacra ferdinandi*

Fábio Olmos, Robson Silva e Silva and José Fernando Pacheco

Received 30 April 2005; final revision accepted 22 July 2005

Cotinga 25 (2006): 21–23

O Chroró-do-Araguaia *Cercomacra ferdinandi*, um especialista de áreas ripárias com vegetação densa, era conhecido apenas da faixa ribeirinha ao longo de ambas as margens do rio Araguaia entre a Ilha do Bananal e as proximidades da confluência do rio Tocantins. Trabalhos realizados no estado do Tocantins e sul do Maranhão documentaram a presença da espécie em vários afluentes da margem direita do Araguaia e também no rio Tocantins pelo menos até a localidade de Palmeirante. A espécie também foi documentada em afluentes do rio Tocantins tanto em sua margem esquerda como na direita, incluindo localidades no Maranhão, o que mais que duplica a distribuição conhecida desta espécie ameaçada. No entanto, hidrelétricas como a UHE de Estreito deverão destruir a maior parte do habitat da espécie nos próximos anos.

Bananal Antbird *Cercomacra ferdinandi* was described in 1928⁸ from nine specimens collected eight months previously at Furo da Pedra, Ilha do Bananal (10°37'S 50°33'W)¹⁰, in the rio Araguaia basin, Brazil. Additional specimens or sight records are available from Araguatins, Conceição do Araguaia, Santa Isabel do Morro, the rio Javaés and Cantão State Park^{2,5,7,9,12}, suggesting its range to be confined to the Araguaia, from the Ilha do Bananal to its mouth. Specimens from Conceição do Araguaia (Furo do Mumbuca and Ramal Ponta de Pedra) in the Museu Paraense Emilio Goeldi (MPEG) and observations near the Ilha do Bananal^{5,7} demonstrate that the species occurs on both banks of the Araguaia in Tocantins, Mato Grosso and Pará. Bananal Antbird has always been

considered an Araguaia endemic, along with Crimson-fronted Cardinal *Paroaria baeri* and Araguaia Spinetail *Synallaxis simoni* which are also restricted to habitats along river margins^{5,6}. The species is considered Vulnerable¹ and included in the Brazilian Red List because its restricted, linear habitat is threatened by agriculture, timber extraction (the alluvial soils are more fertile and support forest with valuable timber species) and, especially, hydropower plants.

During field work in Tocantins, and neighbouring Goiás and Maranhão, we found additional localities for Bananal Antbird that expand its range significantly. To locate and identify the birds where present is easy due to their very characteristic vocalisations³, responsiveness to playback, and the



Male Bananal Antbird *Cercomacra ferdinandi* (Fábio Olmos)

mouse-grey female is unlike any other antbird. Surveys were undertaken on foot, by car and boat on several occasions in 2001–05. Documentation for all localities was made by tape-recordings to be deposited in the Museu de Zoologia, Universidade de São Paulo, as well as photographs and specimens.

In the Araguaia basin we recorded two pairs foraging within a bamboo tangle by the rio do Coco (09°58'S 49°35'W), on 17 August 2002. Also, on 28–30 September 2003, another pair was observed and tape-recorded at the point where the rio Xavante is crossed by road TO 374 (11°41'S 49°29'W). The birds were seen crossing the dirt road bisecting their habitat.

Other localities on the east bank of the Araguaia are as follows: Córrego Manga, a tributary of the rio Piranhas (Fazenda 3R, Ananás: 06°13'S 47°57'W), where several pairs were heard and one tape-recorded and photographed 28–29 May 2003; Ribeirão Lajes (Fazenda Sapucaia, Wanderlândia: 06°37'S 48°07'W), where tape-recorded 31 May and 1 June 2003; and the rio Muricizal, Araganã (06°46'S 48°38'W), where five pairs were found 3 June 2003. An additional locality, found in November 2005 (and not mapped), is Fazenda Veracruz, on the rio Piranha (09°09'S 49°20'W). Thus, it seems that Bananal Antbirds can colonise secondary watercourses of the Araguaia basin where suitable habitat is available.

An interesting finding was the discovery, on 4 June 2003, of Bananal Antbird at the Ilhas Barreira Branca (06°42'S 48°46'W), a series of river islands formed by sediment deposition and changes in the course of the Araguaia. Like similar islands, the Barreira Branca have been colonised by pioneer trees (mainly *Cecropia* spp., *Inga* spp., *Genipa americana* and *Triplaris gardneriana*) with many lianas, especially water-loving *Combretum* sp. Bananal Antbird occurs along the west bank of the Araguaia, where *Cercomacra nigrescens ochrogyna* was first collected by Sneath on the opposite margin to Furo da Pedra⁸. If both co-occur syntopically is unknown.

Bananal Antbird has been documented at several localities in the twin basin of the rio Tocantins. Birds were first found at Palmeirante (07°52'S 47°56'W) on 24 June and 4–5 November 2001, in one of the few floodplain systems associated with the Tocantins. This unexpected finding was documented by tape-recordings and a series of 11 specimens taken at Palmeirante (MZUSP 76181–76191: two females, eight males, one indeterminate) deposited in the Museu de Zoologia da Universidade de São Paulo.

As in the Araguaia basin, Bananal Antbird was found along smaller tributaries, e.g. the rio Corrente (07°13'S 47°44'W, tape-recorded 3 June 2001); rio Tabocas (07°05'S 47°37'W, tape-recorded

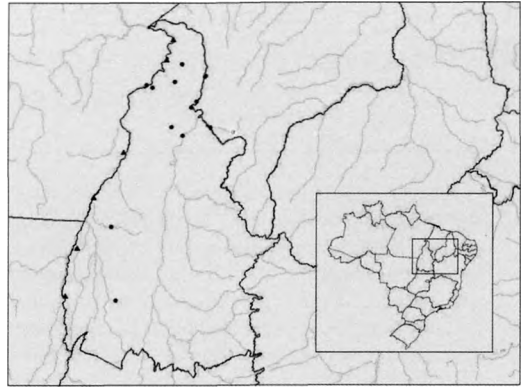


Figure 1. The known range of Bananal Antbird *Cercomacra ferdinandi* in the Araguaia–Tocantins interfluvium, central Brazil. Dots = localities mentioned in the literature or represented by specimens, triangles = new localities discovered during our field work.

27 October 2001); and the rio Pedro Sinal (07°46'S 48°06'W; tape-recordings) and rio Gameleira (07°40'S 48°12'W), both visited on 6 November 2001.

Remarkably, the eastern limit of *C. ferdinandi* is not bounded by the west bank of the Tocantins. On 14 February 2005 a pair was observed at length and tape-recorded in vine tangles at the rio Itauzeiras (06°30'S 47°25'W), a right-bank tributary of the Tocantins in Maranhão. On 10 February the characteristic voice was briefly heard in a different spot upriver (06°29'S 47°24'W) but no response to playback was obtained. On 31 May 2005 a Bananal Antbird was briefly heard singing amidst dense lianas (mostly *Combretum* sp.) on the right (Maranhão) bank of the rio Manoel Alves Grande (07°41'S 47°18'W; 175 m). These findings more than double the known range of Bananal Antbird and demonstrate that it is not restricted to the Araguaia basin but occurs along the Tocantins and its tributaries on both banks.

C. ferdinandi can be locally common and in places such as Córrego Manga is one of the commonest species in its specialised habitat, shared with a guild of river-edge insectivores including Rusty-backed Spinetail *Cranioleuca vulpina*, Glossy Antshrike *Sakesphorus luctuosus*, Band-tailed Antbird *Hypocnemoides maculicauda*, Buff-breasted Wren *Thryothorus leucotis* (all localities) and Silvered Antbird *Sclateria naevia* (only found with Bananal Antbird at Córrego Manga but probably elsewhere).

Bananal Antbird inhabits dense vine tangles within flood-prone areas along river margins, both in young and more mature forests. Pairs or family groups forage mostly at 2–5 m, just below the 'roof' formed by the dense vines growing over trees and shrubs in seasonally flooded areas. The vine

tangles appear to be the preferred microhabitat of the species, similar to other *Cercomacra*¹². The geographically distant Rio Branco Antbird *C. carbonaria* is another river-edge specialist¹¹.

Riverine forests along the Araguaia and Tocantins are dominated by *Triplaris gardneriana*, *Alchornea* cf. *castaneifolia* and *Celtis* sp. Other arboreal species locally associated to river edges are *Clitoria fairchildiana*, *Cecropia* sp., *Genipa americana*, *Inga* spp., *Ficus* sp., *Crataevia tapia*, *Cordia* sp., *Mimosa* sp., *Zygia* sp., *Psidium* spp., *Eugenia* spp., *Bixa orellana* and spiny palms *Bactris* spp., the latter being very common in parts of the Araguaia basin (Córrego Manga). In some areas there are large examples of *Hymenaea courbaril* and *Copaifera langsdorffii*, both of which are exploited for timber⁴. The many lianas include a very common and widespread species of *Combretum* (its flowers attracting a plethora of nectar-eating birds as well as monkeys) and many Bignoniaceae, Malpighiaceae, Polygonaceae (*Coccoloba* spp.), Dilleniaceae (*Davilla* spp.), Mimosaceae (*Acacia* sp.), Caesalpiniaceae (*Bauhinia* sp.), Rubiaceae (*Chiococca* sp.) and Fabaceae (*Dioclea* spp., *Machaerium* sp., *Vigna* spp., *Clitoria* spp., *Macroptilium* spp. and *Canavalia* spp.⁴.

Habitat used by Bananal Antbird is quite restricted to rivers with a narrow or no floodplain such as the Tocantins and several of its tributaries, making its range patchy and vulnerable to changes in flood regime. The Brazilian government plans to construct seven hydropower dams along the rio Tocantins, effectively making the river a long, narrow lake, as has happened to other rivers such as the Tietê and Paraná. The Estreito dam, to be completed in four years, is expected to flood 434 km² upstream of the town of Estreito (near the mouth of the rio Itaueiras) to Palmeirante. Another two dams are being authorised for the Araguaia (Couto de Magalhães and Santa Isabel). If these projects go ahead as planned, the range of Bananal Antbird may well be reduced to the area where it was originally believed to be endemic, the vicinity of the Ilha do Bananal.

Acknowledgements

The information presented here was gathered during field work contracted by Oikos Pesquisa Aplicada. Our thanks to Vitor Bellia, Lais Menezes, Claudio DeLorenci and Ricardo Dias for the opportunity to undertake our ornithological work. Alexandre Aleixo provided information on specimens housed at MPEG and Kevin Zimmer a critique of the manuscript. We dedicate this paper to Edson Endrigo, a good friend and a generous person always willing to share information and his great photographs.

References

1. BirdLife International (2004) *Threatened birds of the world*. CD-ROM. Cambridge, UK: BirdLife International.
2. Fitzpatrick, J. W. & Willard, D. E. (1990) *Cercomacra manu*, a new species of antbird from southwestern Amazonia. *Auk* 107: 239–245.
3. Isler, P. R. & Whitney, B. M. (2002) *Songs of the antbirds*. 3 CDs. Ithaca, NY: Macaulay Library of Natural Sounds.
4. Oikos Pesquisa Aplicada (2002) *Estudos ambientais complementares ao EIA/RIMA da Ferrovia Norte-Sul nos estados de Goiás e Tocantins*, 4(1). Rio de Janeiro: Oikos.
5. Ridgely, R. S. & Tudor, G. (1994) *The birds of South America*, 2. Austin: University of Texas Press.
6. Silva, J. M. C. (1997) Endemic bird species and conservation in the Cerrado region, South America. *Biodiver. & Conserv.* 6: 435–450
7. Silva, J. M. C. (1992) Phylogeny of the *Cercomacra nigricans* species group (Aves: Thamnophilidae) and the biogeographical importance of Pliocene-Pleistocene tectonic movements. *Goeldiana, Zool.* 18: 1–8.
8. Sneathlidge, E. (1928) Novas espécies e subespécies de aves do Brasil Central. *Bol. Mus. Nac.* 4 (2): 1–7.
9. Tocantins, Governo do Estado (2004) *Avaliação ecológica rápida: Parque Estadual do Cantão*. Palmas: SEPLAN.
10. Vanzolini, P. E. (1992) *A supplement to the Ornithological gazetteer of Brazil*. São Paulo: Museu de Zoologia da Universidade de São Paulo.
11. Zimmer, K. J., Whittaker, A. & Stotz, D. J. (1997) Vocalizations, behavior and distribution of the Rio Branco Antbird. *Wilson Bull.* 109: 663–678.
12. Zimmer, K. J. & Isler, M. L. (2003) Family Thamnophilidae (typical antbirds). In: del Hoyo, J., Elliott, A. & Christie, D. A. (eds.) *Handbook of the birds of the world*, 8. Barcelona: Lynx Edicions.

Fábio Olmos

Largo do Paissandú 100/4C, CEP 01034-010, São Paulo, SP, Brazil. E-mail: f.olmos@uol.com.br.

Robson Silva e Silva

Rua São José 48 apto. 31, Embaré, Santos, SP, Brazil. E-mail: rsilvaesilva@uol.com.br.

José Fernando Pacheco

Rua Bambina 50 apto. 104, CEP 22251-050, Rio de Janeiro, RJ, Brazil. E-mail: jfpacheco@terra.com.br.