

## Smoky-fronted Tody-tyrant *Todirostrum fumifrons*, a new species for Venezuela

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Se describe el primer reporte de *Todirostrum fumifrons* para Venezuela. El 2 de noviembre de 1992 CM colectó un ejemplar en la Serranía de Unturán, en el estado Amazonas. Comparaciones con las notas de campo de DA y la descripción del plumaje permitieron la identificación del ejemplar. Este hallazgo sugiere que pueda estar más ampliamente distribuido en la Guayana venezolana, especialmente en las formaciones de borde de los bosque húmedos tropicales y de los bosques con suelos arenosos al sur del río Orinoco.

The genus *Todirostrum* is a group of small Neotropical flycatchers that following current taxonomy comprises 7–14 species<sup>2,10</sup>. It has been suggested that several species be assigned to the genus *Poecilotriccus* (based on syringeal morphology<sup>5</sup>), including that under discussion here, but we retain the alternative classification for now<sup>4,6,7,10</sup>. The genus is distinctive amongst small Tyrannidae in the broad, flat and rather long bill<sup>7</sup>, and short tail with strong legs. In the field, these flycatchers are easily overlooked if their distinctive voices are not known, due to their habit of foraging unobtrusively and usually remaining within dense vegetation. Most *Todirostrum* are lowland species with few in montane areas, and inhabit varied habitats, including desert scrub<sup>4</sup>, shrubs<sup>3</sup>, forest canopy, humid forest borders, secondary woodland, mangrove, *várzea*, gardens, riparian woodland and river islands<sup>6</sup>. Many are found low in the understorey and are usually associated with edge habitats, although three—*T. pictum*, *T. chrysocrotaphum* and *T. nigriceps*—inhabit forest canopy. In Venezuela, the genus *Todirostrum* comprises two distinct assemblages, one found in gardens, parks and low- to mid-level shrubbery and edges, and the other in the canopy or subcanopy of forest edges<sup>4</sup>. Seven species are known from the country, namely *T. nigriceps*, *T. pictum*, *T. cinereum*, *T. viridanum*, *T. maculatum*, *T. russatum* and *T. sylvia*, of which the two last-named have been assigned to *Poecilotriccus*<sup>2,4</sup>.

*Todirostrum fumifrons* is a rather local and patchily distributed species (A. Whittaker pers. comm.) that occurs in shrubs and edges of humid lowland forest in Suriname and French Guiana<sup>10</sup>, and elsewhere through the Guianan Shield and the lower Amazon River in north-east Brazil<sup>9</sup>, from sea level to c.350 m<sup>7</sup>. In Suriname, it occurs in low bushes on the small savannas of Foengoe Island<sup>7</sup>, as well as at Albina, Zanderij, Sipaliwini and Powaka<sup>3</sup>. DA (pers. obs.) has also observed the species along the road to Witagron, in up to 4 m-tall second growth, and in sandy belt forest-savanna

near Zanderij. In Brazil, it is locally uncommon in disturbed scrubby edges of Atlantic Forest and in second growth in the north-east, in Alagoas, as well as in Amazonia, from Serra Grande north to Oapoque, Amapá, in low *campina* forest scrub, *terra firme*, second growth and white-sand areas (A. Whittaker pers. comm.).

In November 1992, whilst working with the Proyecto de Inventario de Recursos Naturales Renovables, CM mist-netted an individual in the south-east of the Serranía de Unturán (01°22'N 65°03'W), at 350 m, in the state of Amazonas, a range of mountains only previously explored once, in 1989<sup>1</sup>. The specimen was deposited in alcohol in the Museo de Historia Natural La Salle and catalogued as an undescribed species (MHNLS 11275). Eleven years later, in November 2003, DA examined the specimen and identified it as *Todirostrum fumifrons*. A. Whittaker and S. L. Hilty subsequently confirmed the identification from photographs of the specimen.

The specimen was mist-netted beside a creek surrounded by lowland humid forest generally up to c.20 m tall with emergents reaching more than 30 m. The understorey was dense and rich in epiphytes, ferns and mosses (CM pers. obs.).

Due to the specimen being preserved in alcohol for almost ten years the feathers are bleached and the supraloral spot is faded and difficult to observe, being a pale smoky coloration that becomes darker around the eye. The head, neck and mantle are tinged yellow-olive, and the wings appear blackish with two prominent wingbars. The wing-feathers are fringed yellowish and the crown appears darker than the back, whilst the throat is white and the breast slightly streaked and grades from slightly creamy to yellow on the belly. The bill is dark with a pale tip and the legs appear lead coloured, whilst the irides are described as being pinkish white on the label. Total length is given as 108 mm, wing chord 48 mm, tail 35 mm and bill-length (nares to tip) 8 mm or 12.9 mm (culmen). Bill-width is 8 mm and the tarsus 20.5 mm.

The subspecies in Suriname and French Guiana is *T. f. penardi*, and one would expect the Venezuelan bird to be of this race. However, the presence of a darker crown and the lack of a white eye-ring suggest it could represent an undescribed form. Given that the specimen is bleached, additional specimens are required to determine this. The species may be more widespread in southern Venezuela, especially at the edge of sandy belt forest near Puerto Ayacucho, along the upper ríos Negro and Orinoco, and in second growth and edge formations of the Imataca reserve.

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