

First photographs of Black Tinamou *Tinamus osgoodi* in Ecuador with notes on subspecific identity and occurrence

On 11 December 2008 we photographed a Black Tinamou *Tinamus osgoodi* on one of the lower ridges of the Cordillera de Huacamayos, prov. Napo, eastern Ecuador (00°40'25"S 77°49'41"W). The bird was on a trail beside the oil pipeline at 1,450 m and was watched for three minutes at c.10 m before it entered the understorey. The plumage appeared uniform dark slaty grey (lacking the freckled head and neck, and dark vermiculated upperparts of Grey Tinamou *T. tao*^{10,13,14}). The upperparts were unmarked with the primaries darkest. There was a brownish hue to the lower breast, belly and thighs, becoming almost rufous at the vent. It had a pale bill, dark brownish irides and pale grey legs. We did not hear the bird vocalise.

Black Tinamou is a rare, local and poorly known species of montane forest in the eastern Andes of Colombia, southern Peru and recently in Ecuador^{3,10,12,14}. Records in Ecuador known to us are as follows: (1) a tape-recording made on the Loreto Road, Napo, at 1,350 m, in June 1998¹¹; (2)

a bird seen and heard on the Shishicho Ridge, Sucumbíos, at 1,400 m, on 7 August 2001¹²; and (3) several sightings from Narupa Reserve, along the Loreto Road, Napo, at c.1,000 m, in 2009. The latter records concern digital photographs taken by camera traps along trails inside this recently established reserve (G. Vásquez Varela pers. comm.). Furthermore, there are undocumented reports of birds heard at the base of Volcán Sumaco (J. Nilsson pers. comm.).

Two subspecies are recognised: *T. o. osgoodi* in south-east Peru and *T. o. hershkovitzi* in south-central Colombia⁴⁻⁷. Differences are subtle, with the nominate having brownish wing-coverts (uniform black in *hershkovitzi*) while the undertail-coverts of *osgoodi* are ochraceous buff vermiculated dark (chestnut-rufous and much less patterned in *hershkovitzi*)^{4,5,8}. Those in Ecuador are probably *hershkovitzi* as our bird had rather uniform slaty grey upperparts including the wing-coverts. In addition, the rufous vent seems unmarked on the photographs. The species' song is a simple descending whistle, similar to the first note of the song of White-throated Tinamou *T. guttatus*¹⁴. Very few sound-recordings are available and it is

unclear if the subspecies differ vocally^{1,9,11}.

The species primarily occurs in lower subtropical and foothill forest. Altitudinal range in Peru is 600–1,500 m^{2,14}; in Colombia the species is known to 2,100 m¹⁰. It prefers heavy humid forest with abundant epiphytes, tree ferns, bromeliads and mosses, and may require primary forest^{3,6,8}. In Ecuador, all records are from mainly undisturbed habitats at 1,000–1,400 m.

Our observation represents the first photographic documentation of Black Tinamou in Ecuador. The records in Ecuador fill a significant gap in the species' distribution and suggest that it is more widespread in the Andes than thought. The species' range may reach even further south wherever there is suitable habitat. Mature humid forest in the lower subtropics and foothills is preferred in Ecuador. Its rarity, shy behaviour and preference for often-remote areas mean that the species is very probably under-recorded. Documentation of future observations should assist in providing new data on its range, ecology, vocalisations and subspecies.

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Figure 1. Black Tinamou *Tinamus osgoodi*, Cordillera de Huacamayos, prov. Napo, Ecuador, 11 December 2008 (Dušan M. Brinkhuizen)

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