

Bolivian Spinetail *Cranioleuca henricae* and Masked Antpitta *Hylopezus auricularis*

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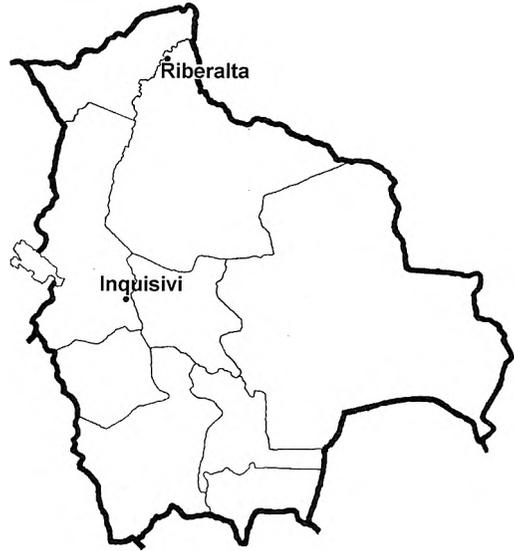
The recently described Bolivian Spinetail *Cranioleuca henricae*⁴ occurs in drier habitats in the mountain valleys of the eastern Andes in the departments of La Paz and (a restricted area of) Cochabamba. Although this vocal and quite visible species was first discovered in 1993, near the rather remote town of Inquisivi, it was subsequently found close to the city of La Paz, at Mecapaca (Bennett Hennessey pers. comm.), and near the popular resort of Sorata (Thor Hjarsen pers. comm.).

Bolivian Spinetail closely resembles the Line-cheeked Spinetail *Cranioleuca antisiensis* of north-west Peru and south-west Ecuador. It is common in dry forest below Inquisivi, which can be reached by walking for c.45 minutes along the main road that winds downhill to the river. The birds can be lured into view with a limited amount of tape playback. The species' vocalisations are included on Mayer⁶ and Mayer⁷.

Although the species occurs in dry native woodland near Inquisivi, it has also been found in a plantation of tall cypresses near Sorata and in roadside shrubbery near the forest below Inquisivi. Thus, it seems as tolerant in its habitat requirements as its close relative the Stripe-crowned Spinetail *Cranioleuca pyrrhophia*, which occupies areas further south (note that two old specimens of that species were collected near Coroico, in the centre of the distribution of Bolivian Spinetail).

It would be interesting to mist-net and photograph, or collect this species, in areas other than the valley system around Inquisivi. One such area is the dry forest in the central Río Tuichi valley (14°30'S 68°30'W), where Alan Perry tape-recorded songs of a bird that was almost certainly either Bolivian or Stripe-crowned Spinetail, without seeing it⁹.

Masked Antpitta *Hylopezus (macularius) auricularis* is only known from near the town of Riberalta, in the department of Beni. The first four specimens were collected in 1937, on the opposite bank of the river from Riberalta, and, although initially described as a new species¹, Gyldenstolpe subsequently considered it a subspecies of Spotted Antpitta *Hylopezus macularius*². In April 1994, after extensive playback of a loud unknown antbird song, I saw a bird that I described in my notebook as "a Spotted Antpitta with a big black mask". A few months later, Mort and Phyllis Isler informed me that my sighting most probably referred to the *auricularis* subspecies of Spotted Antpitta, but that its song was very different from songs of the other forms within that species. Its fast rolling song^{6,7} is



Map of Bolivia showing localities mentioned in the text

in fact very unlike those of all other *Hylopezus* antpittas, which are slow and with a small number of notes. Masked Antpitta's song perhaps most closely resembles the song of Amazonian Antshrike *Thamnophilus amazonicus*^{6,7}! Principally due to its unique song, I recently argued that *auricularis* deserves species rank⁵, and proposed the English name of Masked Antpitta.

The species appears to be restricted to second-growth and shrubbery close to the river and to tolerate disturbance, which would imply that it is not threatened within its small range. Nonetheless, additional data concerning its distribution and habitat would be a worthwhile research subject. It would also be interesting to discover if there are any interactions with Amazonian Antpitta *Hylopezus berlepschi*, whose distinctive song^{6,7} I have not heard near Riberalta.

Masked Antpitta is found just outside town, along the short road leading to the ferry across the Río Beni. This area, known as Hamburgo, is heavily disturbed and muddy, with shrubbery, grassy glades, low forest, and some buildings where bricks are produced. The best area for the species is found after c.1 km, along a narrow road/trail off to the left. Birds sing here at forest edge and inside the shrubbery at dawn, and sometimes during the day, and their distinctive calls can be heard at dusk. Please only use tape playback very sparingly, if at all.

These two species were discovered within a few months of each other, during a six-month birding visit to Bolivia. During the same period, the distinctive song^{6,7} of the highland race *maculicollis* of Red-winged Tinamou *Rhynchotus rufescens* was recorded, proving its specific status (Huayco Tinamou *Rhynchotus maculicollis*³), a new yellow-winged race of Green-cheeked Parakeet *Pyrrhura molinae* was found⁸, and what may prove to be a new species of *Grallaricula antpitta*, whose voice was recorded by Mayer⁷ (where a description can also be found). Observers' attention is drawn, in particular, to this final, unsolved problem and advised to search for the bird. All three taxa were found in the Inquisivi area, with the tinamou often singing from the ridge high above the town (at least during the rainy season in December–January) and easily audible from the plaza, the parakeets inhabiting the same forest as Bolivian Spinetail and the antpitta once heard from a bush at the side of the road, a little higher than the forest. That so many new birds can be found during a short period of time, indicates how much still awaits discovery in Bolivia.

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Figure 1. Masked Antpitta *Hylopezus (macularius) auricularis*, Riberalta, Bolivia, 16 July 1997 (Jon Hornbuckle)



Figure 2. Bolivian Spinetail *Cranioleuca antisiensis*, Inquisivi, Bolivia, 16 July 1995 (Jon Hornbuckle)

