

Additional information on the birds of Ecuador

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Se presenta nueva información para 13 especies de aves en Ecuador, en base a 147 días de trabajo de campo entre 1994 y 2001, entre fines de mayo y mediados de agosto. De interés particular son los registros de *Accipiter poliogaster* a 1.950 m, *Glaucidium brasilianum* y *G. peruanum* en el pedemonte de la ladera oriental, la descripción de las vocalizaciones de *Cypseloides cherriei* y *C. lemosi*, y el segundo registro de *Attila bolivianus* para el país.

With the recent publication of the monumental twin volumes of *The birds of Ecuador*^{8,9}, a wealth of new information has become available for this bird-rich country, greatly supplementing and updating that previously found in coded checklists, notably that of Ridgely *et al.*¹⁰. Inevitably, gaps in knowledge can be recognised and addressed. Information additional to that presented by Ridgely & Greenfield^{8,9} is provided here for 13 species, and was derived from 147 days of field work in Ecuador between 1994 and 2001, all in late May to mid-August.

Only the more significant and interesting records are detailed here. One should note that the text in Vol. 1⁸ is more up to date than the maps in Vol. 2⁹, as stated on p.10 of Vol. 2. Thus, my records such as those of the western subspecies of Squirrel Cuckoo *Piaya cayana*, Rufous-browed Peppershrike *Cyclarhis gujanensis* and Blue-grey Tanager *Thraupis episcopus* from July 2001 at Yangana (1,800 m) in the río Solanda Valley, interior Loja province, are not mapped in Vol. 2⁹ but the text of Vol. 1⁸ appears to encompass such occurrences.

Pearl Kite *Gampsonyx swainsonii*

I studied an individual of this unmistakable little raptor along the Loja–Zamora road at El Tambo (1,650 m), Zamora-Chinchipe province, on 26 July 2001. As well as being at a higher elevation than other records in the country, this appears to be the first record from south-east Ecuador. The species' occurrence here is testimony to Ecuador's increasingly deforested landscape and to the colonising ability of the species, which was first recorded in eastern Ecuador in 1976⁸.

Grey-bellied Hawk *Accipiter poliogaster*

A tour group and I studied an adult of this rarely encountered species along the entrance road to Cabañas San Isidro (1,950 m), Napo province, on 29 July 2000. It was spotted by Shep Krech as it flew across a pasture, and I initially thought it was a medium-sized *Buteo*, perhaps a Roadside Hawk *B. magnirostris*. The bird landed upon an exposed, sunlit snag where we studied it at leisure through a Questar telescope at c.250 m range (Fig. 1). It was a heavily built *Accipiter* with a slightly peaked nape, relatively large head, short primary projection (with

wingtips falling approximately equal with the upper pale grey tail-band) and a moderately long tail whose closed tip appeared squared. The head was uniform blackish, forming a striking hood that contrasted strongly with the whitish to pale grey underparts which extended below the hood-sides as a partial collar. The remaining upperparts were dark slate-grey, the dorsal tail surface darker with three narrow pale grey bands and a narrow whitish tip. The bill was dark with a dull greyish (?) basal area and bright, contrasting cadmium-yellow cere and lores that extended above the eye as a narrow supra-orbital ridge. The eyes were golden-yellow and the legs yellow. Given a view such as this, the species is unmistakable, though I subsequently confirmed details of the head and tail patterns against specimens. Bicoloured Hawk *A. bicolor*, with

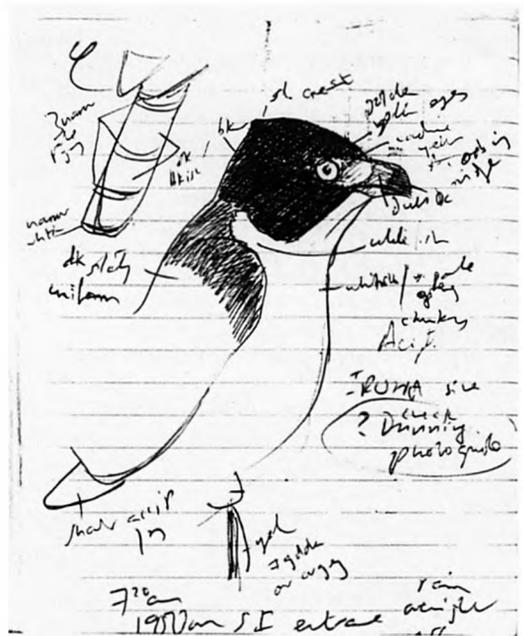


Figure 1. Field sketch (made during and immediately after observation) of Grey-bellied Hawk *Accipiter poliogaster* at San Isidro, 29 July 2000 (Steve N. G. Howell)

which I am quite familiar, is smaller and less thick-set, with a different head pattern, broader and typically less contrasting pale tail bars, and has chestnut thighs. Plate 15 of *Birds of Ecuador*⁹ has a fairly good match for the San Isidro bird but with amber-orange eyes, broader tail bars and a slightly longer primary projection relative to the upper tail-band; the text (p. 84), however, describes eye colour as 'yellow'. The colour plate in Brown & Amadon¹ shows amber eyes for adults yet the text (p. 536) notes eye 'color unrecorded in adult'. Hilty & Brown³ describe (without attribution) the eyes as 'reddish orange', suggesting there may be some variation in this feature.

San Isidro is at notably higher elevation than previous records (up to 500 m) of Grey-bellied Hawk^{3,8}. Given the apparent rarity of the species, however, small numbers may range into the upper subtropical zone but have gone previously undetected due to low population density of both birds and observers.

Crested Eagle *Morphnus gujanensis*

A light-morph adult seen inside forest (flushed from the ground to a sub-canopy perch) at Yuturi, Napo province, on 8 August 1998, is additional to the few records listed⁸.

Subtropical Pygmy-owl *Glaucidium parkeri*

Ridgely & Greenfield⁶ report one seen by me at San Rafael Falls (1,300 m), Napo province, on 24 July 1994. It was a rufous-morph individual (unknown in *G. parkeri*) and was not identified (by me) beyond *Glaucidium* sp. It should not be considered a definite record of *G. parkeri*, though habitat and elevation best fit this taxon (but see below).

Ferruginous Pygmy-owl *Glaucidium brasilianum* and

Pacific Pygmy-owl *G. peruanum*

S. Webb and I heard, tape-recorded and observed a rufous-morph Ferruginous Pygmy-owl in a hedge-row at km 14 on the Loreto Road (1,200 m), Napo province, on 25 June 1995. Noted only to 750 m elevation (mostly below 500 m) in east Ecuador⁸, but extensive forest clearance in this region has provided much habitat for the species, which probably is more widespread in the eastern foothills of the country.

More significant was a Pacific Pygmy-owl seen and tape-recorded at the Hostería El Arenal (900 m), north-east of Zamora, Zamora-Chinchipec province, on 16–17 October 2000 and 23–25 June 2001 (R. S. Ridgely *in litt.* 2001). This represents the first record of the species on the east slope of the Andes, in Ecuador at least. Thus the possibility exists of these two pygmy-owls becoming locally sympatric at some point, should deforestation continue unchecked.

Lesser Nighthawk *Chordeiles acutipennis*

Two birds flying around Catamayo airport (1,200 m), interior Loja province, at dawn on 28 July 2001, were outside the reported range for the species^{8,9}.

Spot-fronted Swift *Cypseloides cherriei*

On 29 July 2001 I studied a loose group of 20–30 Spot-fronted Swifts flying over Loma Linda (2,050 m), above Tandayapa, Pichincha province. Numerous (50+) White-collared Swift *Streptoprocne zonaris*, 10–20 Chestnut-collared Swift *Cypseloides rutilus* and 1–2 White-tipped Swift *Aeronautes montivagus* were also present. Tony Nunnery (pers. comm.) first noted Spot-fronted Swifts at Loma Linda on 7 November 1998 and has since recorded the species there regularly in small numbers (up to 20–30 birds), in all months of the year, but perhaps less frequently in May–June.

Those on 29 July 2001 were watched for over an hour (08h00–09h00) and several tape-recordings were made of their calls. Moore *et al.*⁷ included a recording of this species from north-west Ecuador by Mitch Lysinger but qualified it as possibly pertaining to Chestnut-collared Swift. Ridgely & Greenfield⁹ noted for Spot-fronted Swift 'Voice: Not certainly known.' Those I watched gave basically the same calls as those recorded by ML and I believe his recordings do pertain to free-flying Spot-fronted Swifts. I have field experience with thousands of Chestnut-collared Swifts from Mexico to Ecuador and have not heard them utter such calls. Spot-fronted calls can be transcribed as quiet, slightly nasal, clipped chips, *pihk*, and *pi-pihk*, etc; a usually doubled series of rapid, slightly accelerating, rhythmic chipping, *chirr ti-tititu chirr ti-ti-ti* (much like a cut on Moore *et al.*⁷); and running into series of up to ten, steady-paced chips, e.g., *chirr ti-ti-ti-ti-ti-ti-ti-ti*, etc.

In comparison to Chestnut-collared Swift, the Spot-fronteds appeared heavier bodied with a larger head and slightly shorter, broader tail that usually looked square-tipped when closed (but at times looked very slightly notched and, when spread, clearly somewhat rounded); they were overall more similar in shape to White-chinned (including 'White-fronted') Swift *C. cryptus* (and *C. c. 'storeri'*¹⁵). The white 'spot-fronts' were surprisingly striking (when viewed at fairly close range against blue sky, with low-angle sun) and in some lights glowed like headlights. Flight appeared somewhat heavier and less 'twinkling' or *Chaetura*-like than Chestnut-collared, with more prolonged gliding on bowed wings; such differences were overall subtle and perhaps not consistent. Most if not all of those on 29 July were in active wing moult, with the outer 3–4 primaries old, and growing or shed middle primaries; some also had gaps in the secondaries and not full-grown outer rectrices.

White-chested Swift *Cypseloides lemosi*

Ridgely & Greenfield^{8,9} summarised numerous recent Ecuadorian records of this poorly known species and also noted 'Voice: Not certainly known.' An additional observation (and of a record number) is 160+ individuals flying over the pass at Cordillera de Huacamayos (2,250 m), Napo province, on 27 July 2000, presumably heading from mountain roost sites to feed over the eastern foothills and lowlands. They moved through the pass between 07h30 and 08h40 in association with a passage of 50+ White-collared and 100+ Chestnut-collared Swifts, and were mostly in groups of 10–30 birds. They flew at 20–300 m above the road and many stayed around for minutes, performing group chases, calling frequently and permitting leisurely study.

Like other White-chested Swifts I have seen, the overall shape and flight style were very similar to Black Swift *C. niger* of North and Middle America, which I suspect is the closest relative of *C. lemosi*, as suggested in the latter's type description². Some (presumed males) had longer, slightly forked tails, others (presumed females) had shorter and square-looking or only slightly notched tails, as reported for *lemosi*^{2,9} and as also occurs in Black Swift^{4,11}. None of these birds, or others I have seen in the eastern lowlands, showed any signs of wing moult. The vocalisations sounded similar to Black Swift: single, steady-paced chipping calls, *chip, chip, chip* given by lone birds and slightly sweeter or mellower faster-paced series, e.g. *chih-chih-chih-chih-chih* given in chasing interactions.

[Chapman's Swift *Chaetura chapmani*]

On 17 June 1995, from the tower at Sacha Lodge (300 m), Napo province, S. Webb and I studied 10+ relatively 'large and dark' *Chaetura* swifts in association with Pale-rumped *C. egregia*, Short-tailed *C. brachyura* and other swifts. The relatively large size, dull, brownish-grey rump and lack of any distinct throat contrast suggested at the time that these were Chapman's Swifts (for which Ridgely & Greenfield⁸ report a hypothetical record from Ecuador); they showed no signs of wing moult.

The taxonomy (and distribution) of Chapman's Swift and its relatives became rather confused following Marin's⁶ treatment of the complex (which see for taxonomy and nomenclature). It is possible that the swifts we observed may have been Amazonian Swifts *C. viridipennis*, and in-hand examination may be necessary to ascertain the identity of the taxon (taxa?) in Ecuador. Museum characters of Chapman's, Amazonian, and the austral migrant Ashy-tailed Swift *C. meridionalis* are supposedly similar⁶, but the last-named taxon is distinctive in the field (pers. obs.) and I do not believe the Sacha birds were *meridionalis*.

Pale-rumped Swift *Chaetura egregia*

In the Amazonian lowlands of Napo province, Pale-rumped Swift appears to be locally as common as, or commoner than, Grey-rumped Swift *C. cinereiventris*, although this may reflect the former's relatively striking field characters rather than true relative abundance. S. Webb and I observed up to 10–20 Pale-rumped Swifts (none with any signs of wing moult) on many days at Sacha Lodge (June 1995) and Yuturi Lodge (July–August 1996, August 1998, July 2000), and I consider the species fairly common, at least seasonally, in eastern Ecuador, not 'rare to uncommon'⁸. Grey-rumped Swift appears commoner over the foothills (where I have not seen Pale-rumped) than over the Amazonian lowlands.

White-eyed Attila *Attila bolivianus*

On 13 August 1998 I observed an individual of this species in riverine forest at Yarina Lodge (300 m), Napo province, on the south bank of the río Napo between Coca and Pompeya. The only other Ecuadorian record of this species is a bird S. Webb and I watched at Sacha Lodge, Napo province, on 7 June 1995⁸. Both appeared silently in response to imitations of Ferruginous Pygmy-owl whistles. Elsewhere in its range this species is conspicuously vocal (P. Coopmans pers. comm.), suggesting the Ecuador records were of non-breeding wanderers. Another (remote?) possibility, pending in-hand examination, might be an undescribed, white-eyed morph of Bright-rumped Attila *A. spadiceus* that resembles White-eyed Attila in plumage.

Caquetá Seedeater *Sporophila [americana] muraliae*

A lone, singing adult male along the Río Bombuscaro entrance road (950 m), Zamora-Chinchi province, on 26 July 2001 was notably farther south and at higher elevation than other Ecuadorian records, supporting the supposition that the species might expand its range in response to forest clearance⁸.

Andean Siskin *Carduelis spinescens*

R. A. Behrstock and I saw an adult (male?) at Hacienda La Ciénaga (3,000 m), Cotopaxi province, on 29 July 1994, farther south than other records of the species in Ecuador, where it was first recorded as recently in 1992⁸.

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