

First record of *Xenopsaris albinucha* in Peru

Renzo Zeppilli, Huw Lloyd, Barry Walker, Claudia Torres and Wim ten Have

Received 22 February 2005; final revision accepted 6 April 2005
Cotinga 25 (2006): 38–40

Se reporta el primer registro de *Xenopsaris albinucha* para el Perú con evidencia fotográfica en las Pampas del Heath, Parque Nacional Bahuaja-Sonene ubicado en el dpto. Madre de Dios. En julio de 2004, se observó a una hembra de *X. albinucha* forrajeando en el borde del bosque de galería. Estas observaciones representan una extensión occidental significativa en cuanto al rango de distribución de la especie. Estas observaciones confirman lo que ya se conoce en cuanto a los requisitos del hábitat y el comportamiento de la especie. Resulta difícil afirmar el status de la especie en Perú, debido a las pocas expediciones ornitológicas que se han realizado en las Pampas del Heath.



Figure 1. *Xenopsaris albinucha* habitat, Pampas del Heath, Parque-Nacional Bahuaja-Sonene, Peru (Claudia Torres)



Figure 2. Female *Xenopsaris albinucha*, Pampas del Heath, Parque-Nacional Bahuaja-Sonene, Peru (Claudia Torres)

Xenopsaris (or White-naped *Xenopsaris*) *Xenopsaris albinucha* is a small tyrant-flycatcher that is local and uncommon in tropical deciduous forests, gallery forest habitat, bushy riparian growth and woodland borders, usually near water^{7,12,14}. A monotypic genus, its precise taxonomic affiliations are unknown^{7,12}. Here we report the first record in Peru, with photographic evidence, from the Pampas del Heath, Parque Nacional Bahuaja-Sonene, dpto. Madre de Dios. Our observations represent a westerly range extension for the species of c.185 km.

Observations

On 12 July 2004, at 08h50, during a visit to the Pampas del Heath area of Parque Nacional Bahuaja-Sonene, RZ spotted an unfamiliar flycatcher perched low on exposed bare branches in a gallery forest edge. The area (12°57'S 68°54'W), c.1.5 km west of Quebrada Juliaca, on the río Heath, near the Bolivian border, consisted of a stand of *Mauritia* palms surrounded by an ephemeral stream, the product of rains that periodically flood the grasslands. The ecotone between these two habitats consisted of sparse woody



Figure 3. Female *Xenopsaris albinucha*, Pampas del Heath, Parque-Nacional Bahuaja-Sonene, Peru (Wim ten Have)

shrubs (Fig. 1). The bird had a becard-shaped head, generally black with a brownish crown, a short pointed bill, with whitish lores meeting in front of the eyes. The back was grey, underparts pearly white and wings brownish, with white tertial fringes and no wingbars. The bird perched very upright but when foraging constantly changed perches, gleaning from the outermost live foliage. Although the mean height of the gallery forest was c.20 m, the bird remained at 1.6–4.0 m above ground, and did not vocalise whilst under observation, before shortly disappearing.

The following day, 13 July, all five of us returned to the same area to tape-record and photograph the bird. At c.07h15, BW located it and confirmed the identification. RZ noted that it appeared more active than the previous day, foraging and moving constantly between several perches at the gallery forest edge, never in the understorey or interior of the forest, and often moving to smaller patches of semi-isolated woody shrubs in the nearby grassland. We observed the bird periodically for over an hour, and again it never vocalised. We were able to photograph the bird twice, thus documenting the observation (Figs. 2–3).

Discussion

This represents the first record of *Xenopsaris* for Peru. The nearest known localities to the Pampas del Heath are in dpto. Beni, Bolivia, where the species has been observed along the upper rio Beni at Orion El Beni⁹, and collected at Chatarona². It has also been collected at several localities in dpto. Santa Cruz: near the rio Grande at Masicuri⁶; near the modern-day city of Santa Cruz^{9,11}; Buena Vista, prov. Ichilo, on the rio Surtu¹¹; and along the upper rio San Miguel, between Santa Rosa de la Mina and Santa Rosa del Palmar¹¹.

Some authors report that female *X. albinucha* differs slightly from males in having the crown tinged brown^{3,7,12}. Immatures are also more brown-toned on the upperparts, especially the crown^{7,12,13}. The individual we encountered clearly showed brownish in the crown and wings, leading us to conclude that it was female.

Our observations support previously published data concerning the species' habitat requirements and behaviour, in Venezuela⁷, Brazil¹², Bolivia^{1,6,9,11,12} and Guyana¹³. BW has observed *X. albinucha* along the road from Poconé to Porto Jofre, at Fazenda Santa Tereza (16°45'S 56°52'W), near the rio Pixiam, Mato Grosso, Brazil, on 5 October 2004. Here, a loosely associated pair seemed to prefer a mosaic of gallery forest, bushy savanna and pasture. BW observed the species foraging on the outermost or uppermost foliage of 3 m-tall woody shrubs at the ecotone between

gallery forest and bushy pasture along a wet drainage ditch. Foraging consisted of three principal prey-capture techniques often used in a series of successive bouts: sally-strike-glean to the upper- and underside of live foliage, sally-hover-glean to the underside of live foliage, and occasionally flutter-chase.

From our limited observations, it is difficult to comment on the status of the species in Peru (i.e. whether resident or vagrant). There has been little ornithological exploration of the Pampas del Heath: a Louisiana State University expedition, two Rapid Assessment Program surveys and two previous visits by BW did not find the species in either the Peruvian or the more extensive Bolivian pampas on opposite banks of the rio Heath^{4,5,8}. During our 2004 visit, over four days we surveyed only c.3 km² of the Pampas del Heath (all in Peru) and found just one *Xenopsaris*. It is unknown whether *X. albinucha* undertakes any seasonal movements, but several unpublished records of solitary, non-vocal birds from the Transpantaneira road (the westernmost locality in Brazil), near the rio Pixiam, in Mato Grosso, suggest that the species may be a migrant there (A. Whittaker & K. J. Zimmer *in litt.* 2005). If our Peruvian record was a true vagrant, it may have arrived as a result of a recent *friaje* (cold front) and associated weather. If the species is locally resident in the rio Heath area, it is probably genuinely rare given the amount of available habitat, but is likely to be more common on the more extensive Bolivian pampas.

Acknowledgements

We thank Carmela Landeo and INRENA for permission to visit Parque Nacional Bahuaja-Sonene, and we acknowledge the support of park staff throughout our trip. Stefan Kreft provided details of specimen localities in Bolivia; Mark Robbins details of *Xenopsaris* specimens taken in Guyana; Andrew Whittaker and Kevin Zimmer data from Brazil; and Peter Boesman, Peter Ginsburg and Ignacio Roesler also proffered useful information. Dan Lane and Guy Kirwan reviewed the manuscript.

References

1. Brace, R. C. & Hornbuckle, J. (1998) Distributional records and identification notes on birds of the Beni Biological Station, Beni, Bolivia. *Bull. Brit. Orn. Club* 118: 36–47.
2. Carriker, M. A. (1935) Descriptions of new birds from Bolivia, with notes on other little-known species. *Proc. Acad. Nat. Sci. Philadelphia* 87: 313–341.
3. Cruz, A. & Andrews, R. W. (1989) Observations on the breeding biology of passerines in a seasonally flooded savanna in Venezuela. *Wilson Bull.* 101: 62–76.
4. Foster, R. B., Parker, T. A., Gentry, A. H., Emmons, L. H., Chicchon, A., Schulenberg, T. S.,

- Rodriguez, L., Lamas, G., Ortega, H., Icochea, J., Wust, W., Rono, M., Castillo, J. A., Phillips, O. L., Reynel, C., Kratter, A., Donahue, P. K. & Barkley, L. J. (1994) *The Tambopata-Candamo Reserve Zone of south-eastern Peru: a biological assessment*. RAP Working Papers 6. Washington DC: Conservation International.
5. Graham, G. L., Graves, G. R., Schulenberg, T. S. & O'Neill, J. P. (1980) Seventeen bird species new to Peru from the Pampas del Heath. *Auk* 97: 366–370.
 6. Herzog, S. K., Kessler, M., Maijer, S. & Hohnwald, S. (1997) Distributional notes on birds of Andean dry forests in Bolivia. *Bull. Brit. Orn. Club* 117: 223–235.
 7. Hilty, S. L. (2003) *Birds of Venezuela*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
 8. Montambault, J. R. (ed.) (2002) *Informes de las evaluaciones biológicas de Pampas del Heath, Peru, Alto Madi, Bolivia, y Pando, Bolivia*. Washington DC: Conservation International.
 9. Parker, T. A. & Rowlett, R. A. (1984) Some noteworthy records of birds from Bolivia. *Bull. Brit. Orn. Club* 104: 110–113.
 10. Prum, R. O. & Lanyon, W. E. (1989) Monophyly and phylogeny of the *Schiffornis* group (Tyrannoidea). *Condor* 91: 444–461.
 11. Remsen, J. V., Traylor, M. A. & Parkes, K. C. (1986) Range extensions for some Bolivian birds. 3 (Tyrannidae to Passeridae). *Bull. Brit. Orn. Club* 107: 6–16.
 12. Ridgely R. S. & Tudor, G. (1994) *The birds of South America*, 2. Austin: University of Texas Press.
 13. Robbins, M. B., Braun, M. J. & Finch, D. W. (2004) Avifauna of the Guyana southern Rupununi, with comparisons to other savannas of northern South America. *Orn. Neotrop.* 15: 173–200.
 14. Stotz, D. F., Fitzpatrick, J. W., Parker, T. A. & Moskovits, D. K. (1996) *Neotropical birds: ecology and conservation*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Renzo Zeppilli**
Manu Expeditions, Res. San Felipe, Los Pinos 902, Lima 11, Peru. E-mail: rasrenzo@hotmail.com.
- Huw Lloyd**
Room E411, Department of Environmental and Geographical Sciences, Manchester Metropolitan University, Chester Street, Manchester M1 5GD, UK. E-mail: H.Lloyd@mmu.ac.uk.
- Barry Walker**
Manu Expeditions, PO Box 606, Cusco, Peru. E-mail: bwalker@amauta.rcp.net.pe.
- Claudia Torres**
Unidad de Biología de la Conservación, Universidad Peruana Cayetano Heredia, Armendariz 445, Miraflores-Lima 18, Peru. E-mail: Claudia_torres_sovero@hotmail.com.
- Wim ten Have**
Tanager Tours, La Estrella F-9, J.L. Bustamante y Rivero, Arequipa, Peru. E-mail: info@tanagertours.com.