

NBC Conservation Awards Update

Compiled by Jez Bird

The Neotropical Bird Club is deeply indebted to the March Conservation Fund (MCF) of Tides Foundation, on the recommendation of Ivan Samuels, which, through allocating several years of funding, has greatly enhanced and strengthened our Conservation Awards programme. The March support has funded important conservation projects in the Neotropics as well as allowing us to secure match-funding from other private individuals. During 2015 we were pleased to switch our relationship with MCF to their affiliate body—Tides Foundation—securing the relationship, we hope, into the future. Tides Foundation has increased its level of support, so the Club is pleased to announce that the value of awards we offer has now increased. Applicants may apply for grants of \$1,500, \$3,000 and \$5,000.

2015 awards: 2nd round

NBC was able to offer four awards from the second round of applications in 2015:

1. Evaluation of information gaps, and environmental education, for White-winged Guan *Penelope albipennis* in the north of its range. Adam Esmat Castillo Carrasco, Peru. Awarded \$1,200.
2. Monitoring and conservation of endemic and endangered birds of the Pernambuco centre of endemism. Marcio Amorim Efe, Brazil. Awarded \$1,200.
3. Conservation status and dietary niche of a new species of Mountain-gem hummingbird *Lampornis* sp. nov. from Cerro Hoya National Park, Azuero Peninsula, Panama. Daniel Ernesto Buitrago Rosas, Panama. Awarded \$1,300.
4. Investigating seabird strandings as an indicator of ecosystem status in 3 Important Bird Areas

Visit the NBC website <http://neotropicalbirdclub.org> for more information about the NBC Conservation Fund, including guidelines for applicants and a link to download an application form. The guidelines and form are also available in Spanish.

in Chile. Matias Ignacio Portflitt Toro, Chile. Awarded \$1,400.

Updates from past awards

Ecology and conservation of Carrizal Seedeater *Amaurospiza carrizalensis* in Lower Caroní River, Venezuela: US\$1,500.

Project dates: October 2014–September 2015. Carrizal Seedeater *Amaurospiza carrizalensis* is a recently described Venezuelan endemic (Lentino & Restall 2003). Globally, it is categorised as Critically Endangered, but BirdLife International (2016a) suggests that new information could improve the quality of assessment and potentially lead to ‘downlisting’ of the level of threat. The Red Book of Venezuelan Fauna (Rodríguez & Rojas-Suárez 2008) treats the species as Data Deficient.

To date it has been assumed that Carrizal Seedeater has an extremely small and declining population owing to the ongoing destruction of potentially suitable habitat. However, the low number of records may be partly due to difficulties involved in surveying its preferred and rarely explored habitat, spiny bamboo forests (*bambuzal*).

Some 2,482 km² of suitable spiny bamboo habitat has been mapped. A significant proportion of this is under administrative management of the state power corporation of Venezuela (CORPOELEC) which owns Lakes Caruachi and Tocoma. Lake Tocoma is being flooded through construction of Tocoma Dam to serve development of the Carlos Manuel Piar Hydroelectric Power Plant.

This project assessed the occupation, distribution and habitat use of Carrizal Seedeater in the area of Manuel Carlos Piar Hydroelectric Complex, Lower Rio Caroni, in order to propose the protection of critical areas of habitat. We surveyed 10 localities within 1,000 km² of spiny bamboo habitat. We focused on sites that were about to disappear owing to dam construction. We found 13 Carrizal Seedeaters across four localities. As well as primary fieldwork, we reviewed all existing data (Lentino 2009), including unpublished records (R. Navarro, pers.

comm. 2012) since 2001, and analysed locality data using GIS to generate the first map of the species's distribution. In total there have been 60 observations and 14 records of trapped birds.

Our model predicts a total area of distribution of 1,200 km². The data obtained so far confirms the affinity of the species to *bambuzal*, which grows in disturbed areas with different plant associations (dry forest and savanna). Our results were presented at the XI Venezuelan Congress of Ecology in November 2015, and will be published in a forthcoming paper.

The project included a strong communication component, with engagement of local people during community workshops and interested public at regional and international levels. Publicity materials were recorded with a professional team from CORPOELEC, and the team has featured in radio interviews, newspaper articles and video clips to raise the profile of the work. More information is available through social media: Facebook (AmauropizaVE Semillero de Carrizales), Twitter (@AmauropizaVE) and Instagram (@AmauropizaVE). This will be complemented by presence on other social media, specifically YouTube and Vimeo.

This completes the first phase of the project. We are now working on the second phase, which will conclude in September 2016.

Carlos VALERIS

Conservation of Wattled Curassow *Crax globulosa* in the Brazilian Amazon: ecology, genetic variability and the effects of hunting: US\$1,500.

Project dates: January–August 2015.

Formerly widespread in upper Amazonia, Wattled Curassow *Crax globulosa* is now restricted to a handful of disjunct populations and is categorised as Endangered at a global level (BirdLife International 2016b). Hunting pressure is thought to be the main current threat to the species.

Our project has been operational since July 2014 in the Uacari Sustainable Development Reserve, Carauari municipality of Juruá, Amazonas, Brazil. In September–October 2015, we captured two female and one male Wattled Curassow, and fitted radio transmitters. We have subsequently tracked these individuals to assess their habitat use, range size and seasonal movements. We have also been recording behavioural observations, such as foraging habits.

To date, we have shown that Wattled Curassow consumes more than 50 types of fruits, flowers

and leaves, including from *Ficus* spp. and *Cecropia* spp. In the dry season the species diversifies its diet, searching for insects, molluscs and small vertebrates on the ground. In August 2014, we discovered a nest with a female incubating two eggs. Chicks hatched in September and were observed into October. We also conducted semi-structured interviews in local communities to assess hunting pressure in the region, and to glean ethno-ornithological data about the species including where it occurs, its diet and any information on reproduction.

Currently Wattled Curassow is known to occur in almost all the mid-reach sections of the Rio Juruá and one location in the lower Rio Juruá. Preliminary data from our project indicate that the species occurs more widely in Juruá basin than had previously been recorded. We believe that the population status along this river may be better than previously considered. We will undertake expeditions to Alto Juruá where there is currently no information about the Curassow's presence.

Further work will look at the genetics of the three populations of Wattled Curassow in Brazil (Rio Juruá, Purus and Rio Solimões). This seeks to determine whether the species is undergoing in-breeding depression, and whether populations have experienced a recent genetic bottleneck. Collectively, we hope that these results will provide important information for the conservation of the species.

Gabriel LEITÉ

Assessing and managing human: wildlife conflict between local people and Black-and-chestnut Eagle *Spizaetus isidori* in Upper Quindío, Colombia: US\$1,200.

Project dates: January–August 2015.

Black-and-chestnut Eagle *Spizaetus isidori* is a widespread but poorly known raptor. It was uplisted to Endangered on the IUCN Red List in 2014 on the basis that its declining population is estimated to be very small, with fewer mature individuals than previously thought. The destruction of its montane forest habitat and direct human persecution are inferred to be driving a continuing decline (BirdLife International 2015). Human persecution occurs as a control measure to reduce predation of poultry by eagles (Lehmann 1944, Marquez & Delgado 2010). This interaction is negative on both sides, with human livelihoods affected and the conservation status of Black-and-chestnut Eagle impacted.



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1 Mist-netting in spiny bamboo forest while attempting to record Carrizal Seedeater *Amaurospiza carrizalensis* (Carlos Valeris).

2 Carrizal Seedeater *Amaurospiza carrizalensis* was only described in 2003. Further surveys are vital to understand its distribution given ongoing habitat loss in its known range (Igor Castillo).

3 Carrizal Seedeater is known from lowland areas of spiny bamboo forest which are vulnerable to inundation as a result of ongoing hydroelectric developments in Venezuela. This is the Lower Caroni River. (Emanuel Gómez).

Our project has been evaluating the scale of human–wildlife conflict in the region of Alto Quindío in Colombia’s Central Andes, and seeking a resolution to that conflict. Through interviews with local people, we have assessed perceptions and attitudes towards eagles and biodiversity in general. We also initiated an environmental-education programme to enhance appreciation of wild nature.

The Upper Quindío region is part of the Cuenca Alta del Río Quindío protected area. This covers 32,700 ha within which small human settlements and sustainable land-use are permitted. This area is a buffer zone of Parque Nacional Los Nevados. The area is an Important Bird Area (IBA CO053). We have been trialling survey methods within Valle del Cocora in the town of Salento. Initial approaches led to many false responses so we are now using semi-structured interviews to run a preliminary survey alongside the first of three participatory workshops. These workshops are addressing issues associated with eagle predation on domestic poultry, and providing environmental awareness training. The team has been bolstered by MSc student César Gómez, enabling expansion of the project to include a second community within the study area.

Through interviews, we have revealed that 88% of local farms raise chickens and have gathered new records of eagle attacks. We have built good relationships with local people, which is facilitating the implementation of an environmental educational programme in local communities.

Edwin CAMPBELL

Applying for NBC Conservation Awards

The deadlines for Conservation Award applications are 1 January and 1 July each year. Full details of the Awards programme and application process can be found on the NBC website at <http://neotropicalbirdclub.org/conservation/conservation-fund/>. The NBC Conservation Awards Programme would be unable to support projects without the generous support of independent organisations and private individuals. If you or your company would like to donate to the programme please contact Jez Bird, the compiler of this article.

REFERENCES

BirdLife International (2015) Species factsheet: *Spizaetus isidori*. Downloaded from <http://www.birdlife.org> on 16 September 2015.



4 Wattled Curassow *Crax globulosa* is being studied through long-term observation of radio-tagged individuals in the Juruá basin of Brazil to understand home-range size and seasonal movements (Gabriel Leite).

5 Black-and-chestnut Eagle *Spizaetus isidori* is threatened owing to persecution because it preys on domestic poultry (Juan-Carlos Noreña).



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