

Additions to the avifauna of Unaí and Cabeceira Grande, north-west Minas Gerais

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Received 24 April 2014; final revision accepted 27 March 2015
Cotinga 37 (2015): 61–65

Descrevemos o registro adicional de 23 espécies de aves para os municípios de Unaí e Cabeceira Grande, noroeste de Minas Gerais, elevando a riqueza total da região para 340 espécies. Os registros foram documentados por meio de gravações e fotografias, além de espécimes depositados em museus. Dentre os registros mais relevantes, destacam-se a documentação de um bando de *Penelope ochrogaster* localizado no rio Preto, e a presença de *Knipolegus franciscanus* na região.

The avifauna of the municipalities of Unaí and Cabeceira Grande, north-west Minas Gerais, was recently surveyed by Lopes *et al.*¹⁴, resulting in a checklist of 316 bird species. Despite their extensive field work, additional species can still be expected in the region, principally due to its habitat heterogeneity (see Lopes *et al.*¹⁴) and the large areas yet to be explored. Here we report the occurrence of 23 new species in the municipalities of Unaí and Cabeceira Grande, emphasising documented records of rare and endemic birds, such as Chestnut-bellied Guan *Penelope ochrogaster* and Caatinga Black Tyrant *Knipolegus franciscanus*.

Material and Methods

Bird surveys were conducted in the region on 16–24 July 2011 and 15–18 May 2012, during the dry season, and 10–13 December 2011, in the wet season. SDN also collected data during sporadic visits to the region in August 2012, and September–October 2013, while based at the Unaí campus of the Universidade Estadual de Montes Claros. We sampled birds qualitatively, without conducting methodological surveys. Species were documented by sound-recordings, using a Sony PCM-M10 digital tape-recorder and Sony ECM-674 and Sennheiser ME-66 shotgun microphones, and digital photographs. Copies of recordings have been deposited at the Arquivo Sonoro Prof. Elias Coelho (ASEC 17056–090), Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, and at Xeno-canto (XC: www.xeno-canto.org). Photographs are deposited at Wiki Aves (WA: www.wikiaves.com.br). Additionally, we searched for bird records in the latter two-named databases, which are cited in the relevant accounts. We also searched for specimens in the ornithological collection of the Museu de Ciências Naturais da Pontifícia Universidade Católica de Minas Gerais (MCNA), Belo Horizonte, Minas Gerais, Brazil. Geographical coordinates and altitude (in metres) were obtained in the field using a handheld GPS (Garmin Etrex Venture HC) or subsequently using Google Earth™ (<http://earth.google.com>). Taxonomic nomenclature

and systematics follow the CBRO⁶ and botanic terms are taken from Ribeiro & Walter²⁰.

Species accounts

Letters following the species names indicate the type of record: S = specimen deposited at MCNA; T = tape-recording; P = photograph; O = sight; V = vocalisation.

Chestnut-bellied Guan *Penelope ochrogaster* (T, P, O, V)

The São Francisco population of this Vulnerable species^{4,21} occurs in north and north-west Minas Gerais, where it was collected in 1912/1913^{2,7}, but its distributional limits are poorly known²¹. Records assigned to this species in the municipalities of Januária, Itacarambi, Manga and Arinos are dubious and require confirmation, as they might refer to White-browed Guan *P. jacucaca*²¹. The most recent sightings of *P. ochrogaster* in Minas Gerais were made at Fazenda Brejão, municipality of Brasilândia de Minas, where a single was observed twice in a gallery forest along the rio Paracatu¹⁰, and at Fazenda do Gama, municipalities of Lassance and Três Marias¹⁵. On 20 July 2011, LGM & AP photographed (WA1300140) and sound-recorded (XC174771–772) a group of 10–15 birds in riparian forest by the rio Preto (16°16'56"S 43°58'03"W; 575 m). These birds were constantly vocalising and moving through the canopy. The area consisted of a well-preserved patch of riparian forest of c.20 ha, on the right bank of the rio Preto. Canopy height was c.15–20 m and the open understorey was dominated by *Myrciaria* sp. (Myrtaceae). Other tree species were *Enterolobium contortisiliquum*, *Hymenaea courbaril* and *Libidibia* sp. (all Fabaceae). We returned to the area on 21 and 24 July 2011, but observed only 2–3 birds. This is the first record of a large group of Chestnut-bellied Guans in Minas Gerais, suggesting that a small population may persist along the rio Preto. Although we did not record the species in the region's dry forests, these were visited only once, during the dry season, whereas the species may use

these dry forests only during the wet season, when more resources are available, as it does elsewhere in its range^{2,18,21}. Further data are required to assess the conservation status and distribution of *P. ochrogaster* in north-west Minas Gerais, and the need to protect riparian and dry forests along the rios Preto and Paracatu is urgent².

Zone-tailed Hawk *Buteo albonotatus* (O)

One observed by SDN soaring above the urban area of Unaí (16°21'S 46°54'W; 555 m) on 28 August 2013. The species was seen again in the same area on 14 October 2013 soaring alongside a Turkey Vulture *Cathartes aura*.

Russet-crowned Crane *Laterallus viridis* (S, O)

Two specimens held at MCNA (1886–87) were collected by F. I. Garcia on 18 December 2003 in the district of Palmital de Minas, Córrego Bezerra, municipality of Cabeceira Grande. One was observed by SDN on 18 September 2013 among *Celtis iguanea* (Cannabaceae), at the border of a *vereda* at Fazenda Santa Paula (16°27'S 46°53'W; 560 m). It was foraging on the ground and caught a small butterfly.

Common Gallinule *Gallinula galeata* (O, P)

Two at a small lake at Fazenda Taboca / Riacho das Pedras (16°15'34"S 46°59'39"W; 585 m) on 24 July 2011. There are also two photographs of this species from Unaí (WA1528838, 771964).

Purple Gallinule *Porphyrio martinicus* (S)

A specimen at MCNA (101) was collected on 6 February 2003 in the district of Palmital de Minas, municipality of Cabeceira Grande.

Great Horned Owl *Bubo virginianus* (T, P, O, V)

A pair photographed (WA1300123) by AP, LGM & TS in the dry (16–17 July 2011) and wet (12–13 December 2011) seasons at Fazenda Taquaril, around an old limestone mine (16°24'18"S 46°52'22"W; 690 m), and at the edge of degraded dry forest (16°24'13"S 46°52'26"W; 730 m). They were also sound-recorded by AP & LGM giving an alarm call on 13 December 2011 and TS observed them copulating and duetting late at night on 16–17 July 2011. The old mine also harboured nests of American Barn Owl *Tyto furcata*, American Kestrel *Falco sparverius* and Chopi Blackbird *Gnorimopsar chopi*. On 16 December 2001, one was observed by MFV at the edge of a small forest fragment among soya plantations near Palmital de Minas (16°08'25"S 47°20'22"W; 850 m). Two other photographs taken in the municipality of Unaí are also available (WA1036053, 1035313).

Stygian Owl *Asio stygius* (O, V)

One observed vocalising by SDN in the canopy of an *Enterolobium contortisiliquum* (Fabaceae) at the campus of Universidade Estadual de Montes Claros, in Unaí, on 3 October 2012.

Blue-tufted Starthroat *Heliomaster furcifer* (P, O)

This species' range in Minas Gerais was recently reviewed¹⁷, including the first documented record for Unaí (WA1300118).

Amethyst Woodstar *Calliphlox amethystina* (O)

An adult male was observed by AP & LGM on 16 May 2012 at the border of *cerradão* at Fazenda Catingueiro (16°27'35"S 47°02'34"W; 880 m).

Chestnut-eared Aracari *Pteroglossus castanotis* (O)

Two observed by SDN in a degraded gallery forest at Fazenda Santa Paula (16°27'S 46°53'W; 560 m) on 17 October 2013. They were mobbed by two Tropical Kingbirds *Tyrannus melancholicus* and two Pale-breasted Thrushes *Turdus leucomelas*. Restricted to western Minas Gerais and considered Endangered in the state⁸. Photographs taken in the municipality of Unaí are also available (WA1316731, 1509119 and 1548644).

Cactus Parakeet *Eupsittula cactorum* (P, O, V)

Small groups of 2–6 seen and photographed (WA1300125) daily on 10–13 December 2011 by LGM & AP at Fazenda Taquaril (16°24'S 46°52'W; 610–735 m), in degraded *cerrado*, with a small marsh and dry forest edge. Peach-fronted Parakeets *Eupsittula aurea* were present in the same area, sometimes even in the same tree, despite the fact that they are presumed to be mutually exclusive¹¹. A group of four was also observed by SDN consuming *Myracrodruon urundeuva* (Anacardiaceae) fruit in a small forest fragment beside the rio Preto (16°21'S 46°52'W; 590 m) on 5 October 2012. Consumption of *M. urundeuva* fruits by *E. cactorum* has also been reported at Montes Claros and Januária, Minas Gerais²³. Additional photographs from Unaí are available (WA1534132, 923933, 973727 and 1452244).

Orange-winged Parrot *Amazona amazonica* (T, O, V)

Two seen and sound-recorded (XC174769) by LGM & AP on 21 July 2011 in the canopy of well-preserved riparian forest on the right bank of the rio Preto. Blue-fronted Parrot *A. aestiva* is abundant in the region, being found in almost all habitat types, but Orange-winged Parrot is apparently much less common (LGM pers. obs.), given that we recorded it only once.

Red-billed Scythebill *Campylorhamphus trochilirostris* (T, P, O, V)

Photographed (WA1300136) and tape-recorded by LGM & AP in riparian forests along the rio Preto on 21–22 July 2011. Other records in north-west Minas Gerais were presented by Faria *et al.*¹⁰ from Fazenda Brejão, from where a specimen was deposited in the ornithological collection of the Departamento de Zoologia da Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais, Belo Horizonte (DZUFMG 2567).

Rusty-fronted Tody-Flycatcher *Poecilatriccus latirostris* (T, P, O, V)

Photographed and tape-recorded (XC174774) by LGM & AP in riparian forest at the rio Preto on 21 July 2011, and in riparian forest along a seasonal stream at Fazenda Taboca / Riacho das Pedras (16°16'47"S 46°59'46"W; 600 m) on 24 July 2011. The pair at the rio Preto was observed close to a nest similar to those of other *Todirostrum* spp., located within dense understorey lianas. They responded aggressively to playback.

Grey Elaenia *Myiopagis caniceps* (O, V)

Commonly recorded by LGM & AP on 18–24 July 2011 at Fazenda Taboca / Riacho das Pedras (16°16'S 47°00'W; 585–740 m) and in gallery forests of the rio Preto, and on 15–18 May 2012 at Fazenda Catingueiro (16°27'S 47°02'W; 820–950 m), in *cerradão* and dry forests.

Sirystes *Sirystes sibilator* (T, O, V)

Commonly recorded by LGM & AP on 18–24 July 2011 at Fazenda Taboca / Riacho das Pedras, where it was sound-recorded (XC174779), and at the rio Preto. In both areas it was observed in *cerradão*, riparian and dry forests.

Southern Scrub Flycatcher *Sublegatus modestus* (T, P, O, V)

Photographed and sound-recorded (XC174778) by LGM & AP at Fazenda Taquaril, Fazenda Taboca / Riacho das Pedras, and Fazenda Catingueiro. It was common both in the dry (16–24 July 2011) and wet seasons (10–13 December 2011) in *cerrado sensu stricto*, degraded *cerrado* and *capoeiras*, and is probably resident.

Caatinga Black Tyrant *Knipolegus franciscanus* (P, O)

This species, which is closely associated with dry forests⁴, is considered Near Threatened in Minas Gerais¹³ and Brazil¹⁶. An adult female was observed by AP & LGM on 15 May 2012 in a riparian forest near a small stream at Fazenda Catingueiro. On 18 May 2012, a pair was observed and the female photographed (WA1300142) in a degraded dry forest with limestone outcrops in a limestone mine at the same site. From a biogeographical

perspective, our record provides a link between those in Goiás and the Distrito Federal, and those in northern Minas Gerais and western Bahia^{5,19,24}.

Screaming Cowbird *Molothrus rufoaxillaris* (T, P, O, V)

One photographed (WA1300121) and sound-recorded (XC174777) by LGM & AP with c.5–6 Chopi Blackbirds on 17 July 2011, near an old limestone mine at Fazenda Taquaril. The species was heard on 24 July 2011 in a pasture near a small marsh at Fazenda Taboca / Riacho das Pedras. A pair was observed by SDN at Fazenda Santa Paula on 17 October 2013 foraging in a pasture with a group of Chestnut-capped Blackbirds *Chrysomus ruficapillus* and Chopi Blackbirds. This species has been expanding its range northwards in Brazil due to deforestation and the presence of its main host, *G. chopi*, in these areas¹².

Greyish Saltator *Saltator coerulescens* (T, P, O, V)

Photographed (WA1300127) and sound-recorded (XC174776) by LGM & AP in riparian forests along the rio Preto on 21–22 July 2011. Two additional photographs from Unaí are available (WA1513988 and 1470846).

Scarlet-throated Tanager *Compsothraupis loricata* (O, V)

A group of eight was observed by SDN on 17 August 2012 in a gallery forest of the rio Preto at Hotel Fazenda Curva do Rio (16°19'S 46°55'W; 555 m). Tree species in this forest include *Inga sessilis* (Fabaceae), *Triplaris gardneriana* (Polygonaceae) and *Hymenaea courbaril* (Fabaceae). The birds vocalised constantly and one of them caught a caterpillar in the foliage.

Pileated Finch *Lanio pileatus* × **Red-crested Finch** *L. cucullatus* (P, O, V)

Hybrids between *L. pileatus* and *L. cucullatus* were recently described³ from the Distrito Federal and north-west Minas Gerais, in the municipality of Paracatu, at the border with the municipality of Unaí. On 15 May 2012, AP & LGM photographed (WA1300110) a bird remarkably similar to the hybrids described by Benfca *et al.*³ in a *cerrado sensu stricto* at Fazenda Catingueiro. Although Lopes *et al.*¹⁴ recorded only *L. pileatus* at Unaí, the region lies in the contact zone between their ranges³.

Golden-rumped Euphonia *Euphonia cyanocephala* (O)

A female (or immature male) was observed by SDN at the Hotel Fazenda Curva do Rio on 17 August 2012 with five Purple-throated Euphonias *E. chlorotica*, feeding on berries of *Phoradendron* sp. (Viscaceae).

Final remarks

The 23 species reported here, along with the recent record of Little Cuckoo *Coccyua minuta*²², raise to 340 the total number of species recorded in Unai and Cabeceira Grande, Minas Gerais¹⁴. Despite playback, we failed to find Minas Gerais Tyrannulet *Phylloscartes roquettei*, which is expected to occur in the region¹⁴, probably due to the short period of our surveys and the species' natural low density¹⁵. The region of Unai is considered to be of extreme biological importance and a priority area for bird conservation in Minas Gerais⁸, based on its species richness and the presence of rare and endemic birds. However, there are no Important Bird Areas in the north-west of the state². We recommend that more attention be paid to this region, including the establishment of new conservation units.

Acknowledgements

We thank Spelayon Consultoria ME for providing logistical support to AP, LGM & TS during field work. Luiz P. Gonzaga and Charles Ozanick helped deposit vocal recordings at ASEC. We thank an anonymous referee for comments on the submitted manuscript.

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