

First Bolivian observation of Swallow-tailed Cotinga *Phibalura flavirostris boliviana* in 98 years

A. Bennett Hennessey

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La subespecie *Phibalura flavirostris boliviana* esta conocida por solo tres especimenes y sin observaciones desde 1902. La especie tiene una distribución amplia con unos 2.200 km entre la población en Bolivia y la subespecie en el este de Brasil. El plumaje de las dos subespecies es distinto. Durante una investigación cerca de Pata, nor-oeste de Apolo de Parque Nacional Madidi, observé un ejemplar de *P. f. boliviana* en el borde de un bosque húmedo a 2.000 m. Observé con suficiente detalle para verificar la subespecie pero no el sexo. No existe mucha información sobre la historia natural de las dos subespecies y ninguna información de vocalizaciones de *P. f. boliviana*. Las dos poblaciones están probablemente aisladas genéticamente y es posible que *P. f. boliviana* puede ser significativamente diferente a *P. f. flavirostris* para merecer el estatus de especie. Si *P. f. boliviana* esta considerada como una especie seria bajo el estado amenazada critica.

The type-specimen of the Bolivian Swallow-tailed Cotinga *Phibalura flavirostris boliviana* was collected near Aten (initially published as Atten; 14°56'S 68°19'W, 1,500 m, c.32 km south-east of Apolo), dpto. La Paz, Bolivia and preserved in the American Museum of Natural History by R. S. Williams². He collected a male on 2 August 1902 and a female on 6 August 1902². The record was considered a range extension of c. 2,200 km from the only other known population in south-east Brazil (Bahia south to Rio Grande do Sul), with a few records in Paraguay (west to Guairá) and Argentina (Misiones)^{2,4,7}. Krabbe⁵ noted a mounted *P. f. boliviana* in the Zoological Museum, University of Copenhagen, collected prior to 1847, in dpto. La Paz, Bolivia, but without further details.

Chapman³ described the Bolivian population of Swallow-tailed Cotinga as a new subspecies based on plumage differences. The male *P. f. boliviana* is notably different from *P. f. flavirostris* in having the white post-auricular area broader, extending to the posterior half of the throat, with only the chin and anterior half yellow³. The abdominal region is unmarked, with less black streaking on the sides and flanks³. Female *P. f. boliviana* differs in that the throat is not spotted, the crown and head-sides are greyer, the abdominal region is striped like the male, and the undertail-coverts are unmarked³. Both sexes of *P. f. boliviana* have longer retrices than the nominate³.

During a Wildlife Conservation Society expedition near Pata, north-west of Apolo in Madidi National Park, I observed *P. f. boliviana* on 9 September 2000, at the edge of a humid valley forest at 2,000 m (14°39'S 68°36'W). At 07h38, I briefly observed a *P. flavirostris* perched c.25 m above ground on an exposed limb c.3 m above the canopy. It was on the edge of a small (2–4 km²) forest fragment among 'slash and burn'-maintained pastures. I noted its long 'swallow tail', the black mask, and yellow

back with black scalloping, before it flew over a ridge and into adjacent forest. Three individuals appeared from this valley at 07h43, one landing on the same perch as in the earlier observation. I observed this individual from below for c.30 seconds, noting sufficient detail to verify that it was *P. f. boliviana* due to the broad clean white post-auricular area extending to the throat, but was unable to sex it. The black exposed primary line was seen to be half the width of the Tudor depiction⁶, and the feet were orange, not pink as shown in one photo of *P. f. flavirostris*¹. The other two probably were *P. f. boliviana* based on size and shape, but I did not observe sufficient detail to accurately identify the subspecies. It is possible that this taxon exists north-west of Pata in an extensive area of unstudied, suitable mid-montane forest, of c.1,600 km², in Madidi National Park, and possibly in the poorly studied south-east part of adjacent Tambopata National Reserve, Peru.

The large distance between populations and lack of observations in Argentina and Paraguay since 1977⁸ suggests that the two subspecies probably are genetically isolated. Both taxa are high research priorities⁹ with little natural history and no vocalization data for *P. f. boliviana*. It is possible that *boliviana* could be sufficiently distinct from *flavirostris* to warrant species status. *P. f. boliviana*, if considered a species, would warrant Critical conservation status according to BirdLife International small-range and small-population criteria⁹. More research is urgently needed to determine the taxonomic and conservation status, range, habitat requirements and movements of *boliviana*.

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A. Bennett Hennessey

Bolivian IBA Coordinator, Armonía / BirdLife International, Casilla 1788, La Paz, Bolivia.
E-mail: tangara@unete.com.