

# Feedback

## Champions of the White-winged Guan

With reference to the article on the White-winged Guan (*Neotrop. Birding* 9: 37–43), omitted therein were several prominent people pivotal in the species' recovery. Its survival owes much to Victor-Raul Diaz who ran the Barbara D'Achille breeding centre for many years and subsequently established another centre to continue the guan's *ex-situ* conservation. Indeed, since the collapse of the latter (which was managed by Asociación Cracidae) he has safeguarded the birds held there to the present day despite chronic underfunding and support. Likewise, the role of Lucilla Pautrat, who spearheaded the species' successful reintroduction into its natural habitat, including at Chaparrí Ecological Reserve, also merits wider recognition. The 34,412-ha Chaparrí reserve was initiated 12 years ago (with the first external funding being an NBC conservation grant) by the leading Peruvian conservationist and wildlife photographer Heinz Plenge, in collaboration with the community of Santa Catalina de Chongoyape, Lambayeque. The area now protects the single largest population of White-winged Guans (50–60 individuals, some now fourth generation, which are breeding successfully with wild individuals and are dispersing into suitable habitat nearby). Additionally, Heinz and the NGO he runs, Asociación TuTierra, champion the guan's conservation among the region's rural communities. This initiative has recently received funding from the US Fish & Wildlife Service and will lay the foundation for a community-based conservation strategy and corridor for the species.

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## Lear's Macaw update

In *Neotrop. Birding* 6: 62, the excellent article by Ciro Albano 'Birding in north-east Brazil' states that to visit the Fundação Biodiversitas reserve in search of Lear's Macaw *Anodorhynchus leari* at Canudos, Bahia, one should contact Paula Oliveira. However, she no longer works for the NGO and e-mails to her will not be answered. Those wishing to visit the area should e-mail Thiago at comunicacao@biodiversitas.org.br and copy their message to Tania da Silva at tania@biodiversitas.org.br. Tania works in Canudos and is very keen to

receive visitors; she will make sure any requests are followed up. The cost of the visit (October 2011) is US\$50 per person, payable in local currency; all of the money stays locally with the project to help fund day-to-day expenses. Anyone arriving without prior permission is unlikely to be allowed to visit.

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## Of *Neomorphus* and *Pittasoma*...

I read with interest Kevin Zimmer's article on the Rufous-vented Ground Cuckoos *Neomorphus geoffroyi* of El Valle, Panama, in a recent issue of *Neotropical Birding* (8: 68–73). I venture to add a few words.

My wife and I have a house in Cerro Azul, in the foothills just east of the Panama Canal area, and have enjoyed many close encounters over the years with Rufous-vented Ground Cuckoos. Annoyingly, I have never been able to get a good photograph of an adult, but did manage to take those of a recently fledged young bird shown here. As visible in the photographs, it is very dark—almost black—with an iridescent sheen and lacks the adult's plumage pattern. On the three occasions I have observed young birds, they have always sought refuge in the lower branches of nearby shrubs or trees, whereas adults invariably run away.

After years of seeing these birds in the forest around Cerro Azul in Chagres National Park—albeit at infrequent intervals—I believe that in suitable habitat they are more common at army ant swarms of any size (even quite small ones) than is generally supposed. Seeing them is the problem. Patience is definitely a virtue; chances are much improved by standing back at first and listening for the sound this bird characteristically makes when running around in the leaf litter. In this way the bird's approximate position can be pinpointed before you get too close.

Even following a stealthy approach by the observer, the bird may run away, but generally it will not go far, only seeking a rock or fallen tree as cover. If you stay still or move very slowly, the *Neomorphus* will often return and feed for a long time—sometimes within a couple of meters of the observer—though it will always keep one wary eye



Young Rufous-vented Ground Cuckoo *Neomorphus geoffroyi* (left) and Black-crowned Antpitta *Pittasoma michleri* (above, left and right), Cerro Azul, prov. Panamá, Panama (William J. Adsett)

on you and will disappear again if you make any sudden movement.

Ground cuckoos also appear partial to mud and dust baths. One was observed several years ago at Nusagandi (San Blas) perched on a roadside branch covered in mud; and Maria Allen, Mark Letzer *et al.* observed two birds 'enjoying' a dust bath in the middle of the Pipeline Road in Soberanía National Park.

The article on antpittas at worm feeders (Woods *et al.*, *Neotrop. Birding* 8: 4–10) reminded me of an experience with a Black-crowned Antpitta *Pittasoma michleri* (possibly a young bird). This species (now considered to be a gnateater Conopophagidae) occasionally visits the forest around our house. In April 2004 one roosted close by every night. It was quite tame and would come readily to whistled renditions of its call. I decided to feed it earthworms once a day by simply 'hurling' them in the bird's direction. It developed a taste for them and became even tamer. Because the worms sometimes became 'stuck' on low branches, the bird would glean them by leaping into the air using its long powerful legs to good advantage.

Unfortunately, we are not in Cerro Azul all the time so could not feed the bird daily. Eventually it disappeared for good, probably to wetter forest nearby. It would be great if someone started a feeder station for that species...!

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