



New and noteworthy bird records from Guatemala and Honduras

by Steve N. G. Howell & Sophie Webb

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As with many areas of Central America, much remains to be learned about the occurrence and distribution of birds in Guatemala and Honduras. These countries have been visited infrequently by ornithologists in the past 25 years and consequently little recent data exists about their avifauna.

This paper is based on a total of eight weeks of field work in Guatemala during May and June 1988 (Howell & Webb) and February and March 1991 (Howell), and four weeks in Honduras in June 1988 (Howell & Webb) and March 1991 (Howell). The following list represents significant information concerning 40 species and one hybrid, including three species new to the Guatemalan avifauna and two new to Honduras. We also update status information for certain species, the most recent information for many of which is otherwise that given by Monroe (1968) for Honduras, and Land (1970) for Guatemala.

FULVOUS WHISTLING-DUCK *Dendrocygna bicolor*

Honduras: at Lake Yojoa, Dpto. Cortés, 12–15 birds on 28 May, and 70 birds on 30 May 1988. While the species is known to breed at Lake Yojoa, the highest number recorded there in the past was 30 birds (Monroe 1968).

MASKED DUCK *Oxyura dominicensis*

Honduras: this shy and little-known duck has been reported rarely from Honduras (Monroe 1968) and is not known to breed in the country.

At Lake Yojoa, we observed 4♂♂, 3♀♀, on 28 May 1988, and 6♂♂, 4♀♀, on 30 May 1988. Monroe (1968) saw Masked Ducks at Lake Yojoa in Feb 1963 and Apr 1964 and this, together with our 1988 records, suggests the presence there of a resident breeding population.

WHITE-TAILED KITE *Elanus leucurus*

Honduras: one on Isla Utila, Dpto. Islas de la Bahia, on 5 Mar 1991, is the first record of the species from the Bay Islands and probably represents a wandering individual from the mainland.

DOUBLE-TOOTHED KITE *Harpagus bidentatus*

Guatemala: at Cerro San Gil, Dpto. Izabal, at least 13–14 birds (including six pairs) seen, Feb–Mar 1991. **Honduras:** one at Lancetilla, Dpto. Atlantida, 12 Mar 1991. Although this species has been considered rare in northern Central America (Land 1970, Monroe 1968) it is often one of the commoner rain forest raptors and much of its ‘rarity’ may be attributable to field identification problems. Remarkably, the Lancetilla observation above appears to be only the second Honduran record (cf. Monroe 1968).

GREY HAWK *Buteo nitidus*

Honduras: on the Bay Islands, Dpto. Islas de la Bahia, this species was common and conspicuous on Isla Roatán and at least 4–5 adults, including a territorial pair, were seen on Isla Guanaja. Bond’s (1936) sight reports of Grey Hawk from Guanaja were considered doubtful by Monroe (1968) but my observations confirm the species’ presence there, apparently as a common breeding resident. Surprisingly, on neither Roatán nor Guanaja did I find the usually conspicuous Roadside Hawk *B. magnirostris*, a species reported from both islands (Bond 1936, Monroe 1968). The dynamics of insular hawk populations on the Honduras Bay Islands might repay study. In this context, we note here that no Common Black Hawks *Buteogallus anthracinus* were seen on Utila where they were reported as “very common” (Monroe 1968), but the species was common on Guanaja (“decidedly uncommon”, Monroe 1968).

SHORT-TAILED HAWK *Buteo brachyurus*

Guatemala: Land (1970) mentioned only one old record from “Cobán” (Salvin & Godman 1900: 72), but recent observers have provided records for other areas of the country, mainly the arid interior (Wendelken & Martin 1986) and the Pacific versant (Vannini 1989). In Feb–Mar 1991, in the vicinity of Puerto Santo Tomás, Dpto. Izabal, I saw at least nine Short-tailed Hawks (5 light morph, 4 dark morph), including three pairs, indicating that the species is a common resident there.

BLACK-AND-WHITE HAWK-EAGLE *Spizastur melanoleucus*

Guatemala: singles at Tikal, Dpto. Petén, on 10 and 11 Feb 1991, and at Cerro San Gil on 18 Feb and 2 Mar 1991. **Honduras:** at Lancetilla, the head of a Black-and-white Hawk-eagle was noted hanging from the rear view mirror in a truck belonging to one of the workers. The bird had been killed by a youth “for fun” about a year before in forest 10 km west of Lancetilla, and had since been acquired by the truck driver. This striking

species is generally considered rare throughout Central America (Land 1970, Monroe 1968, Ridgely & Gwynne 1989, Stiles & Skutch 1989) and is a candidate for the ICBP Red Data Book for the Americas (N. J. Collar).

HORNED GUAN *Oreophasis derbianus*

Guatemala: in May 1988 one was shot by a local hunter at about 2500 m elevation in the Sierra de Las Minas, about 20 km NW of Rio Hondo, Dpto. Zacapa (J. Bucklin and B. Rimar); the hunter reported the species to be quite common in this remote area. We examined the remains and deposited a photograph of a rectrix and primary at the American Museum of Natural History in New York. The Horned Guan is one of the world's most endangered cracids and is known, at least historically, from only 24 localities in Guatemala and adjacent Chiapas, Mexico (Andrle 1967). Its unexpected presence in the Sierra de las Minas represents a range extension of 110 km NNE from Volcan de Fuego, and 115 km ENE from the Sierra de los Cuchumatanes.

GREY-BREASTED CRAKE *Laterallus exilllis*

Guatemala: at least 4–5 birds in marshy cattle pasture at Finca El Higuerito, Dpto. Izabal, on 22–23 Feb 1991 represent the first Guatemalan record of this poorly known species. On the latter date, two birds were tape-recorded and one watched (at ranges down to 1.5 m) feeding and calling for 30 minutes. Grey-breasted Crakes have been recorded from Belize (Russell 1966) and Honduras (Monroe 1968), although known from the latter country only by an 1887 specimen.

RUFOUS-NECKED WOOD-RAIL *Aramides axillaris*

Honduras: one in mangroves at the east end of of Isla Roatán, 7 Mar 1991, is the first record from the island. The species is otherwise known in Honduras only from Isla Guanaja (Bond 1936) and from the Pacific coast (Monroe 1968).

UNIFORM CRAKE *Amaurolimnas concolor*

Honduras: one at Lancetilla, 1 Jun, and two others there, 3 Jun 1988. In 1991, Howell watched one bird, and heard another, at Lancetilla (in a different area from the 1988 sightings) on 11 and 13 Mar. These observations suggest that Uniform Crakes are fairly common at Lancetilla. There are only two previous Honduran records (Monroe 1968).

SNOWY PLOVER *Charadrius alexandrinus*

Guatemala: one at Tikal on 1 Apr 1991 was probably a migrant forced down by the prevailing rain and overcast conditions. The only prior report of this species for Guatemala is from the Pacific coast in Apr 1973 (Dickerman 1975). **Honduras:** we found an alternate-plumage Snowy Plover in flooded fields between El Progreso and San Pedro Sula, Dpto. Cortés, on 31 May 1988. The few previous Honduran records (Brown & Monroe 1974, Monroe 1968) were all between Sep and Feb, and our May record is unusually late for a migrant in Central America.

HUDSONIAN GODWIT *Limosa haemastica*

Guatemala: at the shrimp ponds 10 km east of Tilapa, Dpto. San Marcos, we saw 3♂ and 2♀ Hudsonian Godwits on 17 May 1988. The only

previous Guatemalan records are for April, in 1973 and 1974 (Dickerman 1975).

WHITE-RUMPED SANDPIPER *Calidris fuscicollis*

Honduras: three in flooded fields between El Progreso and San Pedro Sula, 31 May 1988. The species is otherwise known from Honduras by two Apr records (Monroe 1968).

BAIRD'S SANDPIPER *Calidris bairdii*

Guatemala: 6–7 at the shrimp ponds 10 km east of Tilapa on 17 May 1988. Previously reported from Guatemala only in Apr 1976 (Dickerman 1977). **Honduras:** one in flooded fields between El Progreso and San Pedro Sula, 31 May 1988, appears to represent the first Honduran record (cf. Monroe 1968, A.O.U. 1983). The bird was studied for 15 minutes and compared directly to White-rumped, Least (*C. minutilla*), and Pectoral (*C. melanotus*) sandpipers.

WILSON'S PHALAROPE *Phalaropus tricolor*

Guatemala: 25 birds at the shrimp ponds 10 km east of Tilapa, 17 May 1988, appear to constitute only the third Guatemalan record (Beavers *et al.* 1991, Salvin & Godman 1903: 395). Lack of observers rather than of birds, however, is largely the reason for the paucity of shorebird records in much of Central America.

FORSTER'S TERN *Sterna forsteri*

Honduras: a basic-plumage bird at Isla Utila, 5 Mar 1991, is the first record for the Bay Islands. Honduras is at the southern limit of this species' Atlantic coast winter range (A.O.U. 1983) and there is only one prior report for the country (Monroe 1968).

CARIBBEAN DOVE *Leptotila jamaicensis*

Honduras: at least four birds calling in dense mangrove-scrub woodland at the east end of Isla Roatán constitute the first record for the island. The species is otherwise known in Honduras only from Barbareta Island and Little Hog Island (Monroe 1968).

RED-LORED PARROT *Amazona autumnalis*

Honduras: only five individuals were seen in two days spent covering most of the island of Roatán; the species was formerly described as "very common" there (Monroe 1968). None was seen on Isla Utila, where Bond (1936) found the species common. Monroe (1968), however, also failed to find Red-lore Parrots on Utila in 1963, and none of the locals spoken with knew of wild parrots on the island. As with the following species, capture of birds for the cage-bird trade is reducing the wild population on Roatán, and may have helped extirpate the species from Utila.

YELLOW-NAPED PARROT *Amazona auropalliata*

Honduras: on Island Roatán only two birds (a pair) were seen in two days, but locals reported the species to be "commoner" on the forested ridges at the easternmost, and least accessible, part of the island. Monroe (1968) considered the species "fairly common to common" on the Bay Islands but capture for the cage-bird trade appears to be seriously affecting the population on Roatán (Yellow-naped Parrots still seemed fairly

common on Guanaja in Mar 1991). Most locals spoken with on Roatán captured birds themselves or knew of people who did, and all agreed there were far fewer parrots now than in the past. Careful questioning revealed that only two types of parrots were recognised (Red-lored and Yellow-naped); consequently the only specimen of Yellow-lored Parrot *A. xantholora* from Roatán, and thus from Honduras (Monroe 1968), remains an enigma.

BLACK-AND-WHITE OWL *Ciccaba nigrolineata*

Honduras: Three seen (apparently two males courting a female) at Lancetilla on 8 Jun 1988, and singles heard there on 3 Jun 1988 and 14 Mar 1991. Previously known from Honduras only by an 1891 specimen (Monroe 1968). Greatly increased hours afield at night in the past ten years have shown this species to be fairly common, at least locally, in southeastern Mexico and Guatemala (R. A. Behrstock, Howell), and such will probably prove to be the case in Honduras.

SHORT-TAILED NIGHTHAWK *Lurocalis semitorquatus*

Guatemala: one at dusk over the forest canopy at the Biotopo Chocon Machaca, El Golfete, Dpto. Izabal, on 20 Feb 1991, is the first Guatemalan record, although a Short-tailed Nighthawk was seen along the Mexican side of the Rio Usumacinta in Feb 1989 (Howell 1989).

Honduras: at least two birds at Lancetilla on 5 Jun 1988, and one on 8 Jun 1988, represent the first occurrence of this species north of north-eastern Nicaragua (A.O.U. 1983). Howell is familiar with this distinctive bird from Costa Rica and Panama, and on 5 Jun the birds were calling, ruling out the possibility of one of the related forms (species?) from South America. Previously, Howell (1989) had wondered about the possibility of the Mexican bird being an austral migrant, *L. (s?) nattereri*, from South America, but the lack of records of that form from southern Central America, the time of year, and the subsequent Guatemala record, support the idea of a resident population in the Atlantic slope rain forests north to eastern Chiapas, Mexico.

BLACK SWIFT *Cypseloides niger*

Honduras: a pair chasing and calling low over the pass at Parque Nacional La Tigra, Distrito Central, 29 May 1988, constitutes only the third Honduran record (cf. Monroe 1968).

BROWN VIOLET-EAR *Colibri delphinae*

Guatemala: at least two singing and 1–2 others seen at 900 m elevation on Cerro San Gil, 24–27 Feb 1991. Previously known in Guatemala only from the vicinity of Cobán, Dpto. Alta Verapaz, and not found in the country since 1928 (Griscom 1932, Salvin & Godman 1892: 283). This species appears to be genuinely uncommon and local in northern Central America.

HONDURAN EMERALD *Amazilia luciae*

Honduras: the rediscovery of this Honduran endemic, in Jun 1988, has been reported elsewhere (Howell & Webb 1989). As so little is known of the species, however, it is worth noting that on 16 Mar 1991 Howell counted 22–28 Honduran Emeralds in 500 × 50 m of thorn forest (part of

a larger tract) 4.5 km west of Olanchito, Dpto. Yoro. While the species appears to be common in its restricted range and habitat, in 1991 a newly-paved road had opened up the area and much of the valley floor continued to be converted into pineapple plantations. We express concern that sufficient habitat should be preserved to guarantee the Honduran Emerald's survival.

SPARKLING-TAILED HUMMINGBIRD *Tilmatura dupontii*

Honduras: at Lancetilla, near sea level, 1♀ on 2 Jun, and 1 immature ♂, 1♀, on 6 Jun 1988. Elsewhere in Central America this species has only been found in the highlands (Land 1970, Monroe 1968, Thurber *et al.* 1987), rarely ranging down to 400 m elevation (Monroe 1968). Its presence at Lancetilla coincided with an extensive bloom of *Inga* trees which attracted at least 14 species of hummingbirds, including Brown Violet-Ear and Black-crested Coquette *Lophornis helenae*, two other species usually associated with foothills.

KEEL-BILLED MOTMOT *Electron carinatum*

Guatemala: at 200–700 m elevation on Cerro San Gil, Howell noted and tape-recorded at least 6–8 birds, most calling, 18–28 Feb 1991. On 27 Feb, three were seen perched together, apparently two males courting a female, and the following day one bird was seen near a probable nest burrow. **Honduras:** at Lancetilla, in similar foothill forest to Guatemala, one seen and 3–4 heard, 1–5 Jun 1988, and two seen, plus 5–6 others heard, 12–17 Mar 1991. Traditionally this species has been considered very rare; there is only one other Guatemalan record this century (Smith 1966). In the last few years, however, Keel-billed Motmots have also been found to be locally common in southern Belize (B. & C. Miller, per ICBP 1989).

The common call, a loud, ringing, nasal *ohhng*, is very similar to that of the closely-related Broad-billed Motmot *E. platyrhynchum*, and this may help explain why Keel-billed Motmots have been overlooked where the two species are sympatric in Central America. In addition, like most motmots, the Keel-billed spends much time perched quietly and motionless, and its preference for the mid to upper levels of forest canopy contributes to the problems of observing the species.

LADDER-BACKED WOODPECKER *Picoides scalaris*

Guatemala: a male was carefully observed in pine-oak woodland at 1800 m elevation on the hills south of Magdalena Milpas Altas, Dpto. Sacatepéquez, on 30 Dec 1990 (T. Fenske). This represents the first record for Guatemala. In Honduras, the Ladder-backed Woodpecker is an uncommon and local resident of pine-oak associations in the interior highlands (Monroe 1968) and further work may show this to be its status in Guatemala.

SCALED ANTPITTA *Grallaria guatimalensis*

Guatemala: one seen at Cerro San Gil, 27 Feb 1991, is the first record for Dpto. Izabal.

GREENISH ELAENIA *Myiopagis viridicata*

Honduras: two birds associating closely with one another on Isla Utila, 5 Mar 1991, constitute the first record for the Bay Islands. This inconspicuous species is not known to be migratory and may be an overlooked breeding resident on Utila.

SPECKLED MOURNER *Laniocera rufescens*

Guatemala: one heard at Cerro San Gil, 19 Feb 1991. Previously known from Guatemala by three old trade skins from unknown localities (Salvin & Godman 1891: 130). **Honduras:** at Lancetilla, two seen and another heard, 3 Jun 1988, and singles seen on 12 and 14 Mar 1991. Otherwise known from Honduras by the four specimens reported by Monroe (1968).

HOUSE WREN *Troglodytes aedon*

Honduras: an individual of one of the southern forms (*musculus* group) seen on Isla Utila, 6 Mar 1991. First record for the Bay Islands, presumably a vagrant from the mainland.

TROPICAL MOCKINGBIRD *Mimus gilvus*

Honduras: one on Isla Utila, 5 Mar 1991. First record for the Bay Islands, presumably a vagrant from the mainland.

BREWSTER'S WARBLER *Vermivora pinus* × *V. chrysoptera*

Guatemala: one (apparently a ♂) on Cerro San Gil, 2 Mar 1991, represents the first Guatemalan record of this distinctive hybrid. The only other published Central American occurrences are from Costa Rica (Stiles & Skutch 1989) and Panama (Ridgely & Gwynne 1989).

GOLDEN-CHEEKED WARBLER *Dendroica chrysoparia*

Guatemala: R. A. Barnhill and Howell observed a male in humid evergreen forest at 900 m elevation on Cerro San Gil, 24 Feb 1991. The bird was part of a mixed-species feeding flock that included 2–3 Black-throated Green Warblers *D. virens*, and was studied for ten minutes at ranges down to 15m. First record for Dpto. Izabal.

PRAIRIE WARBLER *Dendroica discolor*

Honduras: 2–3♂♂, 1♀, on Isla Roatán, 7–8 Mar 1991, and 2♂♂, 2♀♀, on Isla Guanaja, 9 Mar 1991, suggest this species is a fairly common winter visitor to the Bay Islands. Monroe (1968) considered the species rare and listed only three prior records for Honduras, the most recent in 1887.

WHITE-VENTED EUPHONIA *Euphonia minuta*

Guatemala: at least 3♂♂, 3♀♀ near Santo Tomás, 16 Mar 1991, 1–2♂♂, 1♀, near Las Escobas, Dpto. Izabal, on 25 Feb 1991, 1♀ on Cerro San Gil, 28 Feb 1991, and 1♂, 1♀, on Cerro San Gil, 2 Mar 1991. Apparently fairly common in the Caribbean lowlands and foothills, supporting the observations of Wendelken & Martin (1989); the only other Guatemalan record is from the last century (Salvin & Godman 1883: 259).

SLATE-COLOURED SEEDEATER *Sporophila schistacea*

Honduras: at least 15 birds at Lancetilla, 1–9 Jun 1988, including several singing males and a female carrying nest material. None, however, noted at Lancetilla during 10–17 Mar 1991. This nomadic species appears to be expanding its range in Central America: it has invaded the Caribbean Slope of Costa Rica since about 1975 (Stiles & Skutch 1989) and was first recorded in Honduras in 1979 (Marcus 1983).

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Address: Steve N. G. Howell & Sophie Webb, Point Reyes Bird Observatory, 4990 Shoreline Highway, Stinson Beach, California 94970, U.S.A.