

# Sight Record of a Blue Grosbeak (*Guiraca caerulea*) in Colombia

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On April 18, 1973 we observed a male Blue Grosbeak (*Guiraca caerulea*) near Buenaventura on the Pacific coastal plain of Colombia, Department of Valle. This is apparently the first record of this North American migrant for Colombia and for South America. The bird was observed from our car at a distance of about 10 meters, as it perched on a low bush at the edge of a clearing and second growth woodland, along the Buenaventura-Cali road, 21 kilometers (by road) from Buenaventura, at an altitude of about 200 feet (60 meters). The bird was a male in changing plumage, mainly blue below, flecked with brown, particularly on the chest. The upper parts were partly brown, mainly on the crown and mantle, with bright blue feathers appearing on the nape, sides of face, and "shoulders". The rich brown lesser wing coverts and the broad brown wingbar were prominent. The observers were familiar not only with the Blue Grosbeak and Indigo Bunting (*Passerina cyanea*) of North America, but with the species of *Cyanocompsa*, including the small Central American Blue Bunting (*C. parellina*), the Blue-black Grosbeak (*C. cyanooides*) and Ultramarine Grosbeak (*C. cyanea*). The names given here follow Meyer de Schauensee (Species of Birds of South America, Livingston, 1966).

The Blue Bunting is not known south of Nicaragua (Eisenmann, The Species of Middle American Birds, Trans. Linnaean Soc. of New York, 6:1-128, 1955). Meyer de Schauensee (The Birds of Colombia, Livingston Publ. Co., 1964) notes that the Indigo Bunting is casual in Colombia, giving winter records from Choco and Magdalena. The bird we observed, however, had the large stout beak and general appearance of the grosbeak, not of a bunting. Both the Blue-black and Ultramarine occur on the Pacific slope, although the latter is apparently local (Meyer de Schauensee 1964, *op.cit.*), but both are much

darker in overall color and lack the two rich brown marks on the wing. We examined skins of all the above species and of the Indigo Grosbeak (*Cyanoloxia glaucocaerulea*) and Blue Finch (*Porphyrospiza caerulescens*) of Brazil, at the American Museum of Natural History. All of these species were included by Paynter in the genus *Passerina*, subfamily Cardinalinae, family Emberizidae (Check-list of Birds of the World, vol. 13, Harvard, 1970). Examination of the specimens confirmed our identification of the Blue Grosbeak.

Slud (Bull. Amer. Mus. Nat. History 128:372, 1964) notes that the subspecies *lazuli* of the Blue Grosbeak breeds from El Salvador to northern Guanacaste, Costa Rica, and that the migrant race *caerulea*, which occurs in Costa Rica, often in flocks, ranges south to Panama. Eugene Eisenmann (pers. communication) has observed Blue Grosbeaks in Panama, about 50 kilometers west of the Canal Zone, and adds that there are reported sightings from the Canal Zone itself, although only a single Panamanian specimen has been taken.

The occurrence on the Pacific coast of Colombia, of a migrant species that is known as nearby as central Panama is not at all remarkable. The recent increase in the number of observers studying birds in the Neotropics has led to an increase in records of various North American migrants, and as the number of research projects involving mist-netting increases, many sight records, including the present, may be substantiated by specimens.

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