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OBSERVATIONS OF THE OCHRE-BREASTED (*GRALLARICULA FLAVIROSTRIS*) AND SLATE-CROWNED (*G. NANA*) ANTPITTAS IN COLOMBIA

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Observaciones del Tororoi Piquigualdo (*Grallaricula flavirostris*) y del Tororoi Enano (*G. nana*) en Colombia.

Key words: Antpittas, *Grallaricula flavirostris*, *Grallaricula nana*, Colombia, field observations.

The antpittas of the genus *Grallaricula* are among the least known of all South American birds. Data on the distribution, behavior or other natural history topics of these inconspicuous birds are scarce in the literature, in part because they are very difficult to observe due to their quite sedentary, relatively inactive and particularly shy behavior (Ridgely & Tudor 1994).

In this note, I report records of the Ochre-breasted Antpitta (*G. flavirostris*) in the Central Colombian Cordillera, and describe apparent courtship feeding. Additionally, I present some field observations on the Slate-crowned Antpitta (*G. nana*) in a montane forest near Medellín. The purpose of this note is to add to the natural history data for this poorly known genus.

Ochre-breasted Antpitta

Study site. I observed Ochre-breasted Antpittas at La Forzosa (6°59'N, 75°08'W; 1500–1820 m), Vereda Roble Arriba, Mun. Anorí, Departamento de Antioquia. La Forzosa is a

primary wet premontane forest fragment that surrounds the Quebradas Chaquiral and La Soledad, in the NW end of the Central Cordillera. La Forzosa has an annual rainfall between 2600 and 3500 mm, and a relative humidity of 77–95%. There is a short dry season from December to February and a longer wet season from May to October (Cuervo *et al.* 2001).

The northern Central Cordillera is characterized by a complex topography, dissected by steep river valleys and gorges. Primary forests are characterized by a heterogeneous canopy, from 6–7 m on the ridges, 15–17 m on the slopes, increasing to 20 m along watercourses, with occasional emergent trees up to 30 m. Understorey cover is densest on the steep slopes, dominated by terrestrial herbaceous plants, and epiphytes on ridges. Several species of tree ferns and shrubs and small trees of *Miconia*, *Meriania* (Melastomataceae), *Psychotria*, *Palicourea* (Rubiaceae), *Schefflera* (Araliaceae), *Piper* (Piperaceae) and *Cavendishia* (Ericaceae) are common in subcanopy and

understory communities. Herbaceous species of Gesneriaceae, Heliconiaceae, Maranthaceae, and Araceae are also numerous in the understory (Cuervo *et al.* 2001).

Records in the Central Cordillera. The Ochre-breasted Antpitta occurs locally in Ecuador, Perú, Bolivia and Colombia (Fjeldsá & Krabbe 1990). In Colombia, this species has been reported along the eastern slope of the Oriental Cordillera and the western slope of the Occidental Cordillera (Hilty & Brown 1986).

During a preliminary survey of the avifauna of La Forzosa (Cuervo *et al.* 1999), on 26 May 1999, at approximately 13:20 h, Juan Alejandro Palacio (JAP) and I observed two Ochre-breasted Antpittas. They were perched near the ground in the understory, along the edge of the Quebrada Chaquiral at approximately 1700 m of elevation.

This sight record is apparently the third one for this species in the Central Cordillera of Colombia, the first two others being anecdotal reports from sites on the eastern slope of this range in Antioquia (Peña 1998). This suggests that Ochre-breasted Antpittas could have a wider distribution than is reported in the literature.

Apparent courtship. JAP and I observed an individual perched approximately 1 m off the ground on a *Miconia* sp. shrub, on the bank of the watercourse at La Forzosa. During 12 min of observation, this individual was quiet, but then flew behind dense vegetation with abundant fallen tree trunks and branches, and returned to the same perch after several seconds. As we observed the return of this individual (possibly female) to the *Miconia*, we began to listen to a sharp and spaced call. The call came from another bird (a possible male) that was observed carrying a white Lepidopteran in its bill. The “male” immediately flew from the opposite bank of the stream to

the *Miconia*, perching near the “female”. The “male” performed a display that included constant vocalization, while jumping around the “female”, as she moved her wings rapidly. This continued for approximately 15 min and finished when the “male” fed the Lepidopteran to the “female”, whereupon she consumed it and followed the “male” across the watercourse, where more observations were not possible.

Slate-crowned Antpitta

Study site. I observed the Slate-crowned Antpitta at Alto San Luis, San Sebastián-La Castellana, Vereda El Escobero, (c. 30 km SE Medellín city, 6°6'N, 75°33'W, 2800 m), Mun. El Retiro, Departamento of Antioquia, Central Cordillera, Colombia. This site, a forest remnant of approximately 200 ha, has an average temperature of 16.7°C, relative humidity of 75.5%, and annual rainfall of 2280 mm. Disturbed primary forest represents the principal cover in this zone (Anonymous 1996).

Dominant tree species included *Quercus humboldtii* (Fagaceae), *Schefflera arborea* (Araliaceae), *Ilex laurina* (Aquifoliaceae), *Weinmannia balbisiana* (Cunnoniaceae) and *Hyeronima antioquiensis* (Euphorbiaceae). Interspersed with this vegetation are homogeneous patches supporting dense bamboo thickets of *Chusquea* sp. (Gramineae) and some exotic plantations of *Pinus patula* (Pinaceae). Ferns, orchids, and bromeliads are abundant components in the understory of the older native forest.

Field observations. On 2 January 1999 I recorded the first Slate-crowned Antpitta early in the morning after visiting the site intermittently over 14 months. The bird was observed in the undestory of a wet secondary forest on moderate slope, close to the ground on a fallen tree trunk. During 15 min of observation, this individual actively vocalized

and occasionally foraged in the dense vegetation on the trunks and branches near the ground. It was apparently feeding on small beetles because I identified beetle elytra remains in a fecal sample found on the trunk where the bird was observed defecating. On 17 January 1999, on a cold morning with abundant fog, I observed two individuals over 20 min at the same place. The birds foraged together near the ground. I also observed the species briefly during eight sporadic visits after this one. Slate-crowned Antpittas, like other antpittas, vocalize especially in mornings and evenings with abundant fog.

Other species of antpittas that occur in this locality are the Chestnut-crowned Antpitta (*Grallaria ruficapilla*) and the Chestnut-naped Antpitta (*Grallaria nuchalis*). I only have observed or heard Slate-crowned Antpittas on moderate to steep slopes in secondary forest, and have not recorded the species inside bamboo thickets where Chestnut-crowned and Chestnut-naped antpittas have been more common.

Slate-crowned Antpittas have a wider distribution in the Central Cordillera than Ochre-breasted Antpittas (Hilty & Brown 1986), and this is apparently the only site near Medellín where the Slate-crowned Antpitta has been recently recorded.

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