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Fotografía portada / Cover photograph
Slender–billed Schiffornis Schiffornis stenorhyncha, a newly split near–endemic species for Colombia proposed in a paper in this issue. Photograph taken at Santa Cecilia, Bolivar on 7th January 2010. Photo by Blanca Huertas and Thomas Donegan.

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Conservación Colombiana es publicada gracias al apoyo de nuestros donantes:
The subspecies of Brown–throated Parakeet
*Aratinga pertinax* on San Andrés island

*La subespecie del Perico Carisucio* Aratinga pertinax *en la isla San Andrés*

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**Abstract**

Photographs and sound recordings demonstrate the occurrence on San Andrés island of *Aratinga pertinax aeruginosa*, a distinctive subspecies which naturally occurs in northern Colombia. This is the first time the subspecies *aeruginosa* has been recorded as introduced in the Caribbean region, with the nominate subspecies being widely introduced on other islands.

**Resumen**

Fotografías y grabaciones confirman la presencia en la Isla de San Andrés de Aratinga pertinax aeruginosa, una subespecie que se encuentra normalmente en el norte de Colombia. Esta es la primera vez que la subespecie aeruginosa es registrada para la región insular del Caribe, habiendo sido ampliamente introducida la subespecie nominal en otras islas.

Brown–throated Parakeet *Aratinga pertinax* is a lowland species found in northern South America to Panama. Fourteen subspecies are recognised (Dickinson 2003), various of which are strongly differentiated from one another in their plumage (e.g. Restall et al. 2006). It has been known for several years that a resident population of *A. pertinax* now occurs on San Andrés Island (e.g. McNish 2003, McMullan et al. 2010). However, previous authors did not report the species there (Bond 1961, Russell et al. 1979, Hilty & Brown 1986, Tye & Tye 1991). Project Biomap databased almost all collections holding Colombian specimens worldwide and likewise reported no specimens from the archipelago, suggesting a recent establishment. However, most modern publications detailing the geographical range of the subspecies of *A. pertinax* have ignored this population (e.g. Rodriguez & Hernandez 2002, Dickinson 2003, Salaman et al. 2001, 2010, Forshaw 2006, Restall et al. 2006).

The only previous published photograph of *A. pertinax* on San Andrés of which we are aware was taken against the sky with its underparts in a shadow (McNish 2003) and is therefore difficult to identify to subspecies. During October 2009, we visited Big Pond (or La Laguna) on San Andrés Island (c. 12°33′N, 81°44′W, 70 m), where a sizeable flock of *Aratinga* was present. Photographs were taken using ‘digiscoping’ by BH and sound recordings were made by TD.

Photographs confirm that the subspecies involved is the same as that occurring in the northern Colombian lowlands, generally referred to as subspecies *aeruginosa*, due to its bright yellow underparts, contrasting and rather dark greyish breast, greyish but otherwise plain ocular, dark bill, bluish crown and a lack of light or yellow coloration on the face (Figure 1) (cf. Restall et al. 2006, Hilty & Brown 1986, McMullan et al. 2010).

Sound recordings were also taken (XC 86779, 86784–8, 86792–4, 86796–7, 86808) which are consistent with the sole available recording from northern Colombia in acoustic frequency and note shape (Figure 3). However, all *Aratinga pertinax* have a wide repertoire of squawks and screeches, so these recordings do not presently permit identification to subspecies level.

*A. pertinax aeruginosa* is not the most common parrot in captivity in northern Colombia, but it is captured and subject to trade locally (e.g. Figure 2) and the subspecies has been bred in captivity (Adelmeyer 1982). Given strong communication links between San Andrés Island and mainland Colombia, *aeruginosa* is a plausible subspecies for a human–assisted introduction. Discussions with representatives of the regional environmental authority CORALINA revealed reports that the first Brown–throated Parakeets were released on the island after neither a home nor resources were found for keeping caged birds that had been seized from trade (P. Salaman *in litt. 2011*). A natural range expansion is unlikely given that San Andrés Island is closer to the mainland of Nicaragua than it is to northern Colombia, and the natural range of the geographically closest subspecies *ocularis* extends only north as far as Panama (Ridgely & Gwynne 1989) and Costa Rica (Sanchez et al. 1998).

It is not known if this introduced population has had any effects on resident species. No other parrots occur on San Andrés Island (McNish 2003) but it is plausible that Brown–throated Parakeet could compete for food with other large frugivores, such as resident pigeon species. Its preferred nesting sites are termite mounds (Friedmann & Smith 1950, Hilty & Brown 1986), but we have no data on...
its nesting on this island or any competition for nesting sites with other species.

Figure 1. Three shots of same individual of Aratinga pertinax aeruginosa, La Laguna / Big Pond, San Andrés island, October 2009. B. Huertas. The three shots allow in particular the crown coloration (top), supercilium and facial coloration (middle) and breast/belly coloration and contrast (bottom) to be elucidated.

This is not the first time that a native South American subspecies of A. pertinax has been introduced in the Caribbean. The nominate subspecies pertinax, which is naturally endemic to Curaçao and differs strikingly in its plumage from aeruginosa, was introduced before 1860 to St Thomas (Marien & Koopman 1955, Wiley 1993). A ‘natural’ range extension of the St. Thomas population to Culebra, Tortola and Puerto Rico was unsuccessful, with populations dying out between 1975–1982 (Wiley 1993, American Ornithologists’ Union 1998). Individuals have also been recorded on Saba, Guadelupe, Dominica and Martinique (Wiley 1993, Rafaele et al. 1998) and the species is reported as introduced in Florida (e.g. Owre 1973, Lever 2005). To our knowledge, all of these records involve the nominate subspecies, which has extensive yellow plumage on the face. The Colombian subspecies aeruginosa has never previously been reported to our knowledge for the insular Caribbean region or North American AOU area (e.g. American Ornithologists’ Union 1998).

Figure 2. An individual of apparently locally–captured Aratinga pertinax aeruginosa in captivity, San Pedro Frio, Bolivar, Colombia, January 2010. T. Donegan.

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References


**Figure 3.** Sonograms of *Aratinga pertinax aeruginosa*. Left: on Colombian mainland (XC43804, PNN Salamanca, west side, north of Ministerio del Medio Ambiente centre, T. Donegan, January 2009, c.11°00’N, 74°35’W, 0 m). Middle and right, two extracts from same track recorded on San Andrés (XC86786, details in text above).