



Conservación
Número 15 • 31 octubre 2011
Colombiana

©2011 Fundación ProAves • Bogotá • Colombia • ISSN 1900-1592

Birds of Colombia 2011

Aves de Colombia 2011

Conservación Colombiana

Journal for the diffusion of biodiversity conservation activities en Colombia.

Revista de difusión de acciones de conservación de la biodiversidad en Colombia.

ISSN 1900–1592. Non–profit entity no. S0022872 – Commercial Chamber of Bogotá

ISSN 1900–1592. Entidad sin ánimo de lucro S0022872 – Cámara de Comercio de Bogotá.

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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.

Editor General: Yojanan Lobo–y–HenriquesJC

Comité editorial: David Caro, Lina Daza, Thomas Donegan, Yojanan Lobo–y–HenriquesJC, Alonso Quevedo y Paul Salaman.

Publicado en prensa: 31 de octubre de 2011. Algunos artículos disponibles en línea antes de esta fecha.

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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 Frío, Bolivar, Colombia, January 2010. T. Donegan.

Acknowledgements

Thanks to ProAves for supporting our work in San Andrés and Corporación para el Desarrollo Sostenible del Archipiélago de San Andrés, Providencia y Santa Catalina – Coralina (Resolución no. 222 de 28 Mayo 2008) for research permits. Paul Salaman and Rosemary Low provided helpful comments on this paper.

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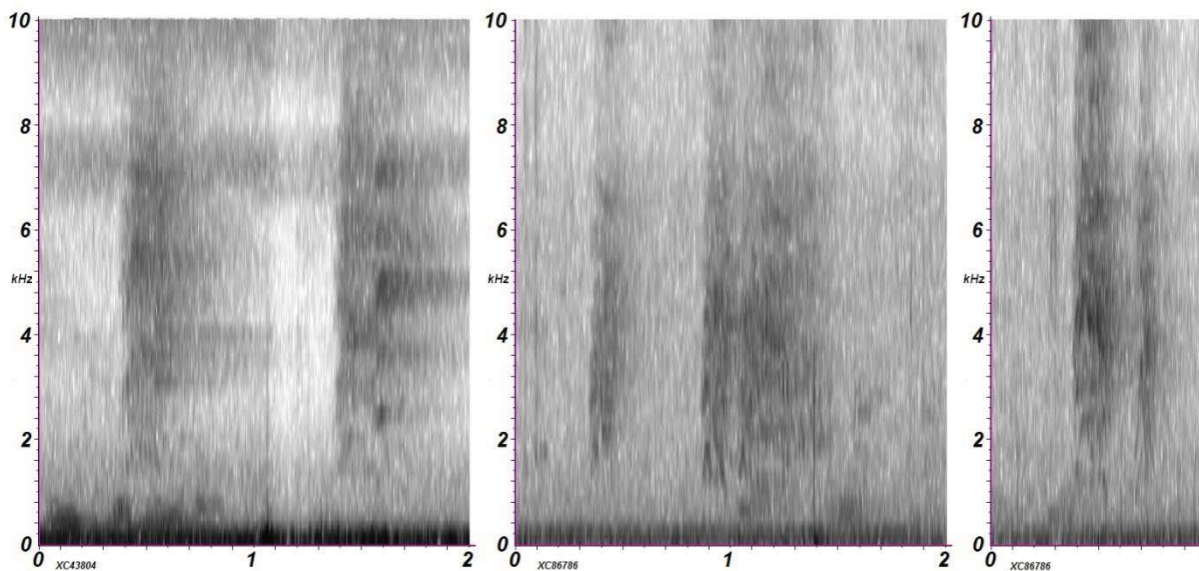


Figure 3. Sonograms of *Aratinga pertinax aeruginosa*. Left: on Colombian mainland (XC43804, PNN Salamanca, west side, north of Ministerio del Medio Ambiente centre, T. Donegan, January 2009, c.11°00'N, 74°35'W, 0 m). Middle and right, two extracts from same track recorded on San Andrés (XC86786, details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



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