

Canyon Canastero *Asthenes pudibunda* in northern Chile

Jay van der Gaast

Se describe la observación de un *Asthenes pudibunda* a 3.500 m en Putre, norte de Chile. Existe una serie de observaciones sin publicar de Putre desde agosto 1992, cuando S. N. G. Howell y S. Webb lo hallaron común, sin poder identificarlo positivamente. En agosto–septiembre y noviembre 1996, los mismos observadores lo encontraron nuevamente común en Putre, esta vez confirmando la identificación, efectuando numerosas grabaciones y estableciendo su presencia en otras varias localidades de la Precordillera de Arica. Estos son los primeros registros fuera de Perú.

On 3 October 1995, while birding a gorge at Putre, northern Chile, an unfamiliar call alerted Dave Sargaent and myself to the presence of an unknown bird in the shrubbery below us. By squeaking, we managed to coax the bird into view, whereupon, from its buffy supercilium, cinnamon chin and streaked throat and upper breast, we could see it was a canastero. Only two species of *Asthenes* are known from this region of Chile and one of these, Dark-winged Canastero *A. arequipae*, could be eliminated immediately due to the throat and breast streaking. Cordilleran Canastero *A. modesta*, although similar in plumage has a very different call to the bird we were observing.

Following a few seconds of observation, the bird flew a short distance, permitting excellent dorsal views. The large amount of rufous in the bird's plumage was immediately apparent. The wings were extensively rufous, as was the tail, the latter showing very little dusky on the inner webs. In addition, the entire rump appeared concolorous with the tail. The many *A. modesta* we had previously seen in this area all showed much more dusky in the tail and plain brown rumps. These features led us to conclude that we had discovered a third species of *Asthenes* in the area. As the bird moved into thicker streamside vegetation, it was joined by a second individual: both gave brief views confirming that the rump and tail were largely rufous, before disappearing up the steep gorge side.

Upon checking the literature, we concluded that the birds were most probably Canyon Canastero *A. pudibunda*, based on the extensively rufous rump and tail. The largely rufous-chestnut tail with virtually no dusky markings is perhaps the best identification feature for this species^{1,4}, although two other *Asthenes* with ranges approaching northern Chile share this feature and the rufous rump. Of these, Rusty-fronted Canastero *A. ottonis* differs in having a rufous forehead (our bird had a plain brown forehead), whilst Maquis Canastero *A. heterura* has almost no streaking on the foreneck⁴. In addition, *A. pudibunda* appeared the

most likely to occur in northern Chile, as its range was known to extend locally as far south as Tacna department⁴, on the Peru–Chile border. The habitat and elevation at Putre (3,500 m) also appeared more suitable for *A. pudibunda*, which occurs from 2,500–3,700 m¹. The rocky ravine with low shrubs in which the birds were observed is also consistent with the species' known habitat^{1,4}.

This is apparently the first published record of *A. pudibunda* outside Peru. In Chile, where it was previously not even considered hypothetical², there have been a number of unpublished sight records from Putre since August 1992, when S. N. G. Howell and S. Webb found it common, without positively identifying it. In August–September and November 1996, the same observers again found it common at Putre, this time confirming the identification, making numerous voucher tape-recordings and establishing its presence at several other sites in the Precordillera of Arica (Steve Howell *in litt.* to G. Kirwan 1997). The purpose of this note is to alert birders visiting the area to the possibility of encountering the species there; it should be searched for in the gorge running along the north side of the town (known as wet gorge A)³.

References

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2. Howell, S. N. G. (1996) *A checklist of the birds of Chile*. Colorado Springs: American Birding Association.
3. Pearman, M. (1995) *The essential guide to birding in Chile*. Belper, UK: Worldwide Publications.
4. Ridgely, R. S. & Tudor, G. (1994) *The birds of South America*, 2. Austin: University of Texas Press.

Jay van der Gaast

Apdo. 364-1002, San José, Costa Rica.