

Taxonomic Round-up



New perspectives concerning the genus *Eriocnemis*

With 11 currently recognised species, the genus *Eriocnemis* is one of the most diversified Andean hummingbird groups, which occupies mainly open montane habitats such as cloud-forest edge or páramo. On the basis of distributional and morphological patterns, a new study highlights the geographical variation and biogeography of the group. Characteristics common to all the species are the greenish dorsal plumage, the conspicuous and mostly whitish tibial tufts, and fairly pronounced tail bifurcation. With the help of plumage synapomorphies for a cladistic analysis, several species groups or superspecies can be distinguished: the *E. vestitus* group (including Glowing *E. vestitus*, Turquoise-throated *E. godini* and Black-breasted Pufflegs *E. nigrivestis*), the *E. luciani* group (including Sapphire-vented *E. luciani*, Coppery-bellied *E. cupreiventris* and Coppery-naped Pufflegs *E. sapphiropygia*), and the *E. alinae* group (including Emerald-bellied *E. alinae* and Colourful Pufflegs *E. mirabilis*). Blue-capped *E. glaucopoides*, Golden-breasted *E. mosquera* and Black-thighed Pufflegs *E. derbyi* differ quite widely in morphology and ecological requirements from the others. Three new subspecies are described within the present review, *E. vestitus arcosi* from south Ecuador and north Peru, and *E. luciani baptistae* from central and south Ecuador. A previously overlooked specimen of *E. luciani* from the Andes of Mérida is the first species record for Venezuela, c. 1,100 km north-east of the main range, and it is recommended that it should be recognised taxonomically as *E. luciani meridae*, on the basis of its unique plumage morphology and geographical separation.

Additionally, the unique type of *E. ventralis* (Salvin 1891) is probably of hybrid origin (*E. vestitus* × *cupreiventris*). The genus may have evolved in the northern Andes, subsequently spreading south and invading the central Andes. Its recent range and phylogenetic patterns indicate vicariance events as the major speciation factor in *Eriocnemis*.

- Schuchmann, K.-L., Weller, A.-A. & Heynen, I. (2001) Systematics and biogeography of the Andean genus *Eriocnemis* (Aves: Trochilidae). *J. Orn.* 142: 433–481.

Was St Kitts Bullfinch a species?

Orlando Garrido and Jim Wiley presented a paper at the 2001 Meeting of the Society of Caribbean Ornithology suggesting that *Loxigilla portoricensis grandis*, which has traditionally been viewed as a form of Puerto Rican Bullfinch, be accorded species status, based on longer tail, wing chord, tarsus and culmen, and differences in the pattern and coloration of the plumage. *Grandis*, which is restricted to St Kitts, has not been certainly recorded since the 1920s but the authors consider that it may persist in the high forest on Mount Misery.

- Garrido, O. H. & Wiley, J. W. (2001) The taxonomic status of the Puerto Rican Bullfinch (*Loxigilla portoricensis*) [Aves: Emberizidae] in Puerto Rico and St. Kitts. *El Pitirre* 14: 76.

A new species of *Percnostola*

We recently reported the discovery of a new *Zimmerius* tyrannulet from the white-sand forests of north-east Peru (*Cotinga* 17: 11). Now Alvarez Alonso, Whitney and their co-workers have described a new antbird, *Percnostola arenarum* (the Allpahuayo Antbird), from the same area. Like

status is already a source for considerable concern. The new form is obviously closely related to Black-headed Antbird *P. rufifrons*, and the authors also studied vocal differences between the four subspecies within the *rufifrons* complex. These proved to be insubstantial, although morphological differences are noticeable and Isler *et al.* recommend that genetic studies are undertaken of the genus and related groups.

- Isler, M. L., Alvarez Alonso, J., Isler, P. R. & Whitney, B. M. (2001) A new species of *Percnostola* antbird (Passeriformes: Thamnophilidae) from Amazonian Peru, and an analysis of species limits with *Percnostola rufifrons*. *Wilson Bull.* 113: 164–176.

Fresh research into the genus *Hemispingus*

The genus *Hemispingus* traditionally comprises 12 species of rather dull-coloured tanagers of Andean forests. Four of these are polytypic, with as many as seven subspecies recognised for *H. superciliaris*. Taxonomic relationships within this group, and with similar-looking *Basileuterus* warblers, are confused and poorly understood. A new study has used partial mtDNA sequences and a set of morphological characters to study their phylogenetic relationships. The molecular dataset strongly supports the monophyly of *Hemispingus* (including the warbler-like species and finch-like *H. rufosuperciliaris*) compared to other nine-primaried oscines (*Ramphocelus*, *Chlorospingus*, *Atlapetes/Buarremon*, *Basileuterus*) and indicates either that *Atlapetes/Buarremon* could be tanagers or that *Chlorospingus* may be finches. The authors of the study propose a phylogeny containing three major clades: mostly greenish eye-browed birds

(*trifasciatus*, *atropileus*, *auricularis* and *calophrys*), mostly grey warbler-like birds (*superciliaris*, *verticalis* and *xanthophthalmus*), and mostly ochraceous birds (*rufosuperciliaris*, *goeringi*, *piurae*, *frontalis* and *melanotis*). The relationships among these three clades are unresolved. Species status is suggested for *H. auricularis* and *H. piurae*. The molecular data suggest that most diversity in *Hemispingus* tanagers predates the period of marked eco-climatic fluctuations in the upper Pleistocene.

- García-Moreno, J., Ohlson, J. & Fjeldså, J. (2001) MtDNA sequences support monophyly of *Hemispingus* tanagers. *Molecular Phylogenetics and Evol.* 21: 424–435.

Name change for Black-spectacled Brush-finch...

The range-restricted and globally threatened *Atlapetes melanops* (Black-spectacled or Black-faced Brush-finch) is a recently described taxon (see *Cotinga* 12: 44). In a corrigendum to their paper describing the species, Thomas Valqui and Jon Fjeldså have suggested that the specific name be revised to *melanopsis*, because *melanops* is a junior homonym of *Buarremon melanops* (the specimen of which most probably represents an example of *Atlapetes [rufinucha] melanolaemus*).

- Valqui, T. & Fjeldså, J. (2002) *Atlapetes melanopsis* nom. nov. for the Black-faced Brush-finch. *Ibis* 144: 347.

...and for Bolivian Blackbird

Based on changing perspectives in icterid systematics, Peter Lowther has suggested that a new name is required for the Bolivian Blackbird *Oreopsar bolivianus*, and recommends *Agelaioides oreopsar* as being appropriate.

- Lowther, P. E. (2001) New name for the Bolivian Blackbird. *Bull. Brit. Orn. Club* 121: 280–281.