



Figure 1. Male Double-collared Seedeater *Sporophila caerulea*, New Island, Falkland Islands, 7 February 2009 (Georgina Strange)

### Double-collared Seedeater *Sporophila caerulea* on the Falkland Islands

On 7–8 February 2009 a male Double-collared Seedeater *Sporophila caerulea* was photographed near the New Island settlement (New Island: 51°43'S 61°18'W), Falkland Islands. Its plumage was typical (Fig. 1), with bluish slate-grey upperparts (darker on the lores and front); a very conspicuous pale, creamy yellow bill which was decurved, short and stout; a white, short and very contrasting moustachial stripe that reached the bill; black chin and throat; and a white collar with a blackish band on the upper chest. The underparts were dirty white whilst the wings and tail were brownish. A narrow half eye-ring was visible below the dark eyes and the legs were dark brown. It was found on a few low *Cupressus macrocarpa* trees, with Black-chinned Siskins *Carduelis barbata*, and later was seen feeding on seed heads of the introduced grass *Holcus lanatus*. At other times it sheltered within European Gorse *Ulex europaeus*. The bird only occasionally allowed close approach down to 10 m, being quite shy, usually skulking and keeping to the *Cupressus*.

Double-collared Seedeater breeds commonly from central Bolivia and Paraguay east to southern Brazil and Uruguay, and south to northern Argentina. Although the species is sometimes stated to occur south to north-east

Chubut<sup>1,2,4</sup>, its presence south of southern Buenos Aires (1,300 km from the Falklands) is apparently unknown in the present day (M. Pearman *in litt.* 2009). During the non-breeding season southernmost breeders move north, as far as southern Amazonia<sup>4</sup>. In Argentina, it has been recorded exceptionally as far south as Staten Island (Isla de los Estados, Tierra del Fuego), in January 1882<sup>5</sup>, with another extralimital record from prov. Neuquén in January 1997<sup>6</sup>.

A ship-assisted episode cannot be eliminated for this record as cruise ships regularly visit New Island. The bird showed no signs of captivity, with no visible abrasion to the plumage. On the day it was found, a putative White-crested Elaenia *Elaenia albiceps* (juvenile) was also present just 200 m away, suggesting they were both natural vagrants. There is one previous reference to *S. caerulea* on the Falklands<sup>2</sup> but without details, making ours the first confirmed record in the archipelago.

### Acknowledgements

To Ian Strange, for all his help, support and for enabling research on New Island. The New Island Conservation Trust supported field studies at their reserve, by supplying research facilities, accommodation and subsistence on the island. To Dan Birch and Riek van Noordwijk for all their help. Mike Morrison provided data, Mark Pearman made important comments and provided relevant references, and Robin Woods refereed the manuscript. David Santos provided references. RM was supported via Project 'Albatroz', financed by Programa Propolar (Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia, Portugal) during his stay on New Island, and further financial support was received from the Falkland Islands government.

### References

1. Fjeldså, J. & Krabbe, N. (1990) *Birds of the high Andes*. Copenhagen: Zool. Mus., Univ. of Copenhagen & Svendborg: Apollo Books.
2. Olog, C. C. (1979) Nueva lista de la avifauna Argentina. *Opera Lilloana* 27: 1–324.
3. de la Peña, M. R. & Rumboll, M. (1998) *Birds of southern South America and Antarctica*. London, UK: HarperCollins.
4. Ridgely, R. S. & Tudor, G. (1989) *The birds of South America*, 1. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
5. Salvadori, T. (1900) Contribuzione all'avifauna dell'America Australe (Patagonia, Terra del Fuego, Isola Degli Stati, Isole Falkland). *Ann. Mus. Civ. Stor. Nat. Genova* Ser. 2(20): 609–634.
6. Veiga, J. O., Babarskas, M. P. & Acerbo, P. E. (2002) Nuevas observaciones de aves para la provincia de Neuquén, Argentina. *Nuestras Aves* 44: 10–11.

### Rafael Matias

*Eco-Ethology Research Unit, Instituto Superior de Psicologia Aplicada, Rua do Jardim do Tabaco 34, Lisboa, Portugal; and New Island Conservation Trust, New Island, Falkland Islands. E-mail: rfsmatias@gmail.com.*

### Georgina Strange

*New Island Conservation Trust, New Island, Falkland Islands.*

Received 9 April 2009; final revision accepted 14 May 2009