

New records of Sulphur-breasted Parakeet *Aratinga maculata* in Pará and Amapá states, Brazil

Sulphur-breasted Parakeet *Aratinga maculata* is known from just a few localities in northern South America^{5,7,8}. Long confused with Sun Parakeet *A. solstitialis*, only recently has it been recognised specifically, based on subtle but consistent morphological characters^{6,8}. *A. maculata* is a brightly plumaged bird of savannas and other open areas, gathers in large flocks and roosts in tree cavities^{2,3,8}. However, very few data exist concerning its distribution, habits and natural history, making it one of the most poorly known of all Neotropical psittacids.

On 29–30 October 2006 at 17h30 FO & JFP observed a flock of nine *A. maculata* flying low over a matrix of pasture and second growth beside the rio Jari, in the municipality of Laranjal do Jari (00°50'31"S 52°30'57"W), Amapá. The diagnostic features were seen clearly. Despite extensive work further east, between Laranjal do Jari and Macapá, no further records were made. On 2–31 October 2009, TVVC & CBA recorded several groups of the species during surveys on the border between Pará and Amapá states. Flocks were observed in flight or perched in open areas and strips of forest, including

individuals flying over the village of Monte Dourado (01°31'22"S 52°34'55"W), in the municipality of Almeirim, Pará, and over Laranjal do Jari, on the other side of the rio Jari. They were observed mostly in open areas, but also flying over primary and second-growth forests, including *Eucalyptus* plantations. The species was also recorded near habitation, where they were seen resting, copulating and consuming fruits of species such as *Euterpe oleracea*, *Anacardium occidentale*, *Inga* sp. and *Laetia* sp. During our bird censuses in Monte Dourado, we observed seven groups, the sizes of which varied from two to 14, with a mean of eight individuals.

Flock sizes observed are similar to those reported by Silveira *et al.*⁸ at Monte Alegre (2–10 individuals), although groups of up to 30 have been recorded³. The species vocalises much more frequently in flight than perched, when birds usually emit only short calls and rarely 'sing'. Its vocalisations recall those of Sun Parakeet, as already noted by Silveira *et al.*⁸, and its vocal repertoire primarily comprises the *keu* 'song' given both in flight and perched (XC 57212–213), and a short weak *kek*, which resembles calls of *Brotogeris* spp. (XC 57522) and is given only when perched.

The range of *A. maculata* in Brazil was thought to be restricted to the vicinity of Monte Alegre and Alenquer, Pará⁸. Our records appear to be the species' easternmost, extending its range c.250 km north-east and confirming its presence in the state of Amapá. The presence of a member of the *A. solstitialis* group in Amapá, a region with extensive savanna enclaves, was initially suggested by Forshaw¹, who alleged that the north-west of the state may be occupied, as did Milensky *et al.*⁴. However, these authors did not mention any evidence for its occurrence there.

Elsewhere in northern South America, *A. maculata* is known from Surinam and French Guiana. Records in southern Surinam, from the Sipaliwini savanna, previously attributed to *A. solstitialis*, were

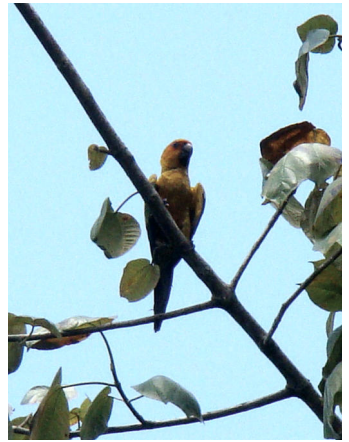


Figure 1. Sulphur-breasted Parakeet *Aratinga maculata*, Monte Dourado, Pará, Brazil, October 2009 (T. V. V. Costa)

recently proven to involve *A. maculata*^{5,7,8}, and the species is considered fairly common there by O'Shea⁷. In adjacent French Guiana, early records listed in Tostain *et al.*⁹ as *A. solstitialis* probably concern *A. maculata*, but no specimen or other evidence exists as confirmation. Records in that country are from the upper Maroni River at the border with Surinam, where available habitat appears unsuitable for the species and where trading wild birds is common practice among local people, meaning that these records may pertain to escapees (O. Claessens pers. comm.). Further studies are needed to confirm its natural occurrence in that country. Other historical records of *A. maculata* in Brazil from the south bank of the Amazon appear erroneous and were discussed by Silveira *et al.*⁸.

Our records demonstrate that *A. maculata* occupies a much broader range (to western Amapá) than previously thought. Furthermore, our data suggest that the species is perhaps benefiting from the deforestation that characterises the study region, given that *A. maculata* prefers open areas and roosts in tall dead trees. Based on this, we expect that it may even expand its range to recently deforested regions beyond the current range, and further studies

may verify that it reaches even further north-east than the municipality of Laranjal do Jari.

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