

Neotropical News



PAN-AMERICAN

Distribution maps for Western Hemisphere birds and mammals

Published in 2003 on separate CDs, these digital distribution maps for birds and mammals in the Western Hemisphere should prove to be an invaluable resource for ornithologists and birdwatchers (as well as mammalogists). The project to produce the maps was a joint venture between the Center for Applied Biodiversity Science at Conservation International, NatureServe, The Nature Conservancy, The Field Museum (Chicago), Wildspace (Ontario) and the World Wildlife Fund. You can now also download compressed files of the maps for any genus of bird or mammal in the Americas free from the NatureServe website (www.natureserve.org/getData/mammalMaps.jsp). However, unless you have a broadband internet connection, it is worth noting that the file sizes are still quite large. To read any of the maps you need to have installed either ArcView 3.X (available for purchase at distributors listed on www.esri.com) or ArcExplorer software, which can be downloaded free of charge from www.esri.com/software/arcexplorer/index.html or from the NatureServe site.

- Ridgely, R. S., Allnutt, T. F., Brooks, T., McNicol, D. K., Mehlman, D. W., Young, B. E. & Zook, J. R. (2003) *Digital distribution maps of the birds of the Western Hemisphere*. Version 1.0. Arlington, VA: NatureServe.
- Patterson, B. D., Ceballos, G., Sechrest, W., Tognelli, M. F., Brooks, T., Luna, L., Ortega, P., Salazar, I. & Young, B. E. (2003) *Digital distribution maps of the mammals of the Western Hemisphere*. Version 1.0. Arlington, VA: NatureServe.

Quail symposium proceedings published online

The proceedings of a symposium held on the conservation of quail in the Neotropics during the VI Neotropical Ornithological Congress in Monterrey, Mexico, in 1999, have been published online. Edited by Jack C. Eitnien, John T. Baccus, Sheldon L. Dingle and John P. Carroll, they may be downloaded free at www.cstbinc.org/neotropicalQuail.html.

NORTH AMERICA

USA

Ivory-billed Woodpecker in Arkansas' 'Big Woods'

Outside the Neotropical region, but concerning a species at least formerly known from Cuba, comes the exciting news of the rediscovery of Ivory-billed Woodpecker *Campephilus principalis* in the USA. Following a sighting by Gene Sparling while kayaking in Arkansas in 2004, ornithologists have confirmed the species' continued survival, having obtained video footage documenting the record. Surveys reveal little about population or breeding, but the observations to date are consistent with a very sparse population. The 'Big Woods' area of eastern Arkansas covers 220,000 ha of which 40% is forest approaching maturity (a requisite of the species). Since the rediscovery, the US Fish & Wildlife Service and Nature Conservancy have continued their 20-year policy of buying land and replanting in the area in order to protect the species and its habitat.

- Fitzpatrick, J. W., Lammertink, M., Luneau, M. D., Gallagher, T. W., Harrison, B. R., Sparling, G. M., Rosenberg, K. V., Rohrbaugh, R. W., Swarthout, E. C. H., Wrege, P. H., Barker Swarthout,

S., Dantzker, M. S., Charif, R. A., Barksdale, T. R., Remsen, J. V., Simon, S. D. & Zollner, D. (2005) Ivory-billed Woodpecker (*Campephilus principalis*) persists in continental North America. *Scienceexpress report* 10.1126/science.1114103. Available at: www.sciencemag.org/cgi/rapidpdf/1114103v1.pdf, published online 28 April 2005

- Big Woods Conservation Partnership website: <http://www.ivorybill.org/> [accessed 11/5/05]

CARIBBEAN

ST LUCIA

New hotel threatens White-breasted Thrasher

A hotel and residential development has been proposed on a 215-ha site with an estimated 138 breeding pairs of White-breasted Thrasher *Ramphocinclus brachyurus* (22% of the world population of this Endangered species). Overall, the dry forests of eastern St Lucia hold c.80% of the species' population, so any spin-off developments would further impact the thrasher. The UK-based developers, Design Construction Group, hoped to begin forest clearance in early 2005 for this European Investment Bank-funded project which is linked to the 2007 cricket world cup. They were waiting for, but apparently expecting, a favourable decision from the St Lucia Development Control Authority on whether they could proceed. St Lucia needs to develop its tourist industry, especially after 2005 when small Caribbean banana producers lose the favourable status an illegal European Union trade policy affords them. The development would provide jobs and improve marina facilities, but fishermen and sea-moss farmers

would be forced to move, and dredging and mangrove clearance would have a negative impact on fish stocks, so the decision is not simply a bipolar conservation versus development argument.

- *World Birdwatch* 27 (1): 6 (March 2005)

SOUTH AMERICA

BOLIVIA

Blue-throated Macaw found west of the río Mamoré

Bolivian ornithologist Mauricio Herrera, coordinator of the Asociación Armonía/Loro Parque Foundation Blue-throated Macaw *Ara glaucogularis* conservation program, has found the species west of the río Mamoré—a 100 km extension of the known range in dpto. Beni. This comes as a result of work with landowners, ranch hands, families and communities in the region, whose economy is based on cattle ranching.

Anecdotal evidence from the new site suggests that the macaw population could be spreading again after capture by the illegal bird trade affected the species in the 1980s and 1990s. Further new sites have been found in the north of the known range, but surveying is logistically difficult in that area.

- *World Birdwatch* 27 (1): 11 (March 2005)

BRAZIL

Study of Araripe Manakin

A team supported by the BP Conservation Programme has discovered a nest of the Araripe Manakin *Antilophia bokermanni* (Critically Endangered)—a species described only eight years ago. The team has also found ten new springs in the area, each with associated manakin populations, and has increased the number of known sites for the species to 26.

- *World Birdwatch* 27 (1): 9 (March 2005)

Murdered environmentalists

The conservation movement can only be shocked and saddened to learn of the murders of human

rights and environmental activist Dorothy Stang on 12 February, and conservationist Dionisio Ribeiro Filho on 22 February. Dorothy Stang taught sustainable farming methods to poor settlers unfamiliar with Amazon soils and helped to establish a federal peasant farming reserve in the state of Pará, and to protect it from illegal loggers and ranchers encroaching the area. In 2004, although aware of the risk to her life, she gave evidence before a congressional committee of inquiry into deforestation, naming logging companies that were invading state areas. Sister Stang bravely continued her work in the face of death threats that continued until her murder in February.

Dionisio Ribeiro Filho dedicated the last 15 years of his life to protecting the 26,000-ha Tinguá Biological Reserve from poachers, cagebird collectors and edible palm heart *Euterpe edulis* cutters. Tinguá, just north of Rio de Janeiro, is part of the Tijuca-Tinguá-Órgãos Biosphere Reserve and harbours Atlantic Forest species including, at least formerly, White-necked Hawk *Leucopternis lacernulata* and Blue-chested Parakeet *Pyrrhura cruentata* (both Vulnerable). Again, Dionisio Ribeiro Filho worked on bravely despite the death threats he and colleagues received. Police believe that opponents of these environmentalists' inspiring work were responsible for both murders.

- Rocha, J. (2005) Obituary: Sister Dorothy Stang. *Guardian Unlimited* (21 February 2005). Available at: www.guardian.co.uk/brazil/story/0,12462,1419087,00.html [accessed 11/5/05]
- UNEP-WCMC (1991/2003) Tijuca-Tingua-Orgãos Biosphere Reserve. Available at: www.unep-wcmc.org/sites/pa/0569q.htm [accessed 11/5/05]

Serra do Urubu IBA to be preserved

A 390-ha plot adjacent to the 630-ha Frei Caneca Private Nature Reserve has been purchased by SAVE Brasil, thereby protecting

the Serra do Urubu Important Bird Area (IBA) in Pernambuco state. BirdLife Brasil is working with community leaders, government agencies and other stakeholders to promote the sustainable use of surrounding land, and to prevent the spread of fire onto these government-recognised reserves. The American Bird Conservancy-funded surveys of the IBA discovered 21 endemic birds, including four species previously known only from Murici: Alagoas Foliage-gleaner *Philydor novaesi*, Alagoas Antwren *Myrmotherula snowi* (both Critically Endangered), Alagoas Tyrannulet *Phylloscartes ceciliae* and Orange-bellied Antwren *Terenura sicki* (both Endangered). The reserves protect other rare flora and fauna, including a bromeliad new to science. Similar work is being pursued in the Serra das Lontras in Bahia state (see elsewhere in this issue).

- *World Birdwatch* 27 (1): 11 (March 2005)

COLOMBIA

Good news for Humboldt Oak forest birds

A ProAves study funded by the American Bird Conservancy's William Belton Small Grants Program brings encouraging news concerning four endemic species that are at least seasonally dependent on the (endemic) Humboldt Oak forests of Colombia. Between 66% and 85% of the habitat in the ranges of the four species has been converted to agriculture. The ProAves study located Mountain Grackle *Macroagelaius subalaris* (Critically Endangered), Black Inca *Coeligena prunellei* (Endangered), Rusty-faced Parrot *Hapalopsittaca amazonina* (Endangered) and Gorgeted Wood-quail *Odontophorus strophium* (Critically Endangered) at 20–29 of the 151 sample sites each. These results exceeded conservationists' expectations and have led each of the species to be reclassified as Vulnerable.

- Study of rare birds in Colombian oak forests encouraging (26 April 2005) *Surfbirds News*. Available at: http://www.surfbirds.com/sbirdsnews/archives/2005/04/study_of_rare_b.html [accessed 11/5/05]

ECUADOR

First Ecuadorian Ornithological Meeting

The First Ecuadorian Ornithological Meeting was held in Quito, in March 2005, marking a great step towards the creation of a National Ornithological Network and the development of a National Strategy for the Conservation of Birds. The 140 delegates took part in plenary talks, follow-up workshops and oral and poster contributions. The proceedings are due to be published before *Cotinga 24* is distributed and will be available at: www.geocities.com/reunionavesecuador. NBC donated three subscriptions as awards for the best contributions.

- Juan F. Freile *in litt.* (16 March 2005)

Ecotourists sought at Playa de Oro

Playa de Oro is a small community in north-west Ecuador that owns 11,000 ha of very humid tropical

rainforest, the country's last pristine Chocó Forest. The area holds 340 bird species, including Chocó endemics and Endangered species. A project of Neblina Forest, the Gaia Foundation for ecotourism and the Earthways Foundation has established a lodge in the nearby Reserva de Tigrillos and is seeking to do the same at Playa de Oro. The project has strong local support, and is seen as the only way to resist a logging company that has been active in surrounding areas and which is seeking to buy the land. The project organisers are seeking donations to refurbish suitable log cabins in the area, and offer significant contributors a three-night/four-day package with accommodation and a bird guide whilst in Playa de Oro. For more information, please contact Mercedes Rivadeneira of Neblina Forest via mrivadeneira@pi.pro.ec.

- Mercedes Rivadeneira *in litt.* (2 May 2005)

Tumbes reserves

The 2004 British Birdwatching Fair focused conservation attention on the Tumbesian dry forests of south-west Ecuador and north-west Peru. A broad consortium of scientific, conservation and cultural organisations have

purchased 1,680 ha adjacent to La Ceiba Private Reserve, bringing the total area protected to 6,980 ha. The former landowner also donated 300 ha to 23 local households and the project will help these and other local people to use their land sustainably, protecting the forest in order to maintain the watersheds on which they depend and as a source of forest products. Some local people will be employed directly as park guards, whilst the provincial and municipal authorities are seeking to develop the area's tourist potential. It is hoped that emigration from this marginal land will be stemmed because without local people's interest in the forest resources, it becomes vulnerable to large-scale timber extraction for short-term gain by non-residents. Another member of the *Bosques Sin Fronteras* consortium has purchased an 800-ha site known as Jatumpamba-Jorupe. Between them, the two reserves serve to further the viability of the Tumbesian region's endemic flora and fauna, including Endangered birds like Grey-cheeked Parakeet *Brotogeris pyrrhopterus* and Blackish-headed Spinetail *Synallaxis tithys*.

- *World Birdwatch* 27 (1): 8 (March 2005)