

Neotropical News



PAN-AMERICAN

Wanted: distributional data for Golden-winged and Blue-winged Warblers

The newly established 'Golden-winged Alliance' is seeking any unpublished records of Golden-winged Warbler *Vermivora chrysoptera* and Blue-winged Warbler *V. pinus* outside the USA and Canada. The population of *V. chrysoptera* has decreased in recent years owing to hybridisation with *V. pinus*, and deforestation in its non-breeding range and along migration routes. The Golden-winged Alliance aims to identify priority sites for conservation of the species, where it will then coordinate concrete conservation action. Please send any records you have of these species from South America to Maria Isabel Moreno (mmoreno@proaves.org), and from Central America to Mariamar Gutiérrez (mariamar@avesnicaragua.org). Please include the following data for each observation: observer, date, precise locality (including as much detail as possible and ideally coordinates), elevation, abundance, data on sex and age (if known), habitat description, and any other potentially useful comments (associated migratory species, etc.).

- Mariamar Gutiérrez & Alianza Alas Doradas *in litt.* 13 September 2005

CARIBBEAN

BAHAMAS

Bird population declines following hurricanes

Surveys funded by the Grand Bahama Power Company have revealed major declines in bird populations between July 2004 and 2005, a year in which the islands were hit by two major

hurricanes. Nectar-, fruit- and seed-eating birds appear to be worst affected, with declines of 88% in Blue-grey Gnatcatcher *Poliioptila caerulea*, 86% in Cuban Emerald *Chlorostilbon ricordii* and 72% in Western Spindalis *Spindalis zena*.

- *World Birdwatch* 27 (4): 3 (December 2005)

CUBA

Rice paddy IBAs

In Cuba, techniques used for cultivating rice result, over very large areas, in fields at varying stages of flooding and draining. Together with reduced fertiliser use, this has led to high levels of vertebrate and invertebrate biodiversity. The paddies in two areas have become important feeding areas for birds that roost and nest in neighbouring wetlands, and in an unusual move for an agricultural area in the Neotropics, both have been proposed as Important Bird Areas. Both the 60,600-ha Costa Sur de Sancti Spiritus and the southern zone of Pinar del Río Province hold large colonies of aquatic birds. The latter is particularly noteworthy for its populations of Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus* (c.20,000) and the Vulnerable West Indian Whistling-duck *Dendrocygna arborea* (thought to exceed 100). A conservation project is being implemented in both areas by a group from the biology department at the Universidad de la Habana, with funding from the Whitley Fund for Nature.

- BirdLife International (2006) Rice paddies proposed as Cuban IBAs. Available at: http://www.birdlife.org/news/news/2006/01/cuba_ibas.html [accessed 5/01/06]

CENTRAL AMERICA

PANAMA

Upper Bay of Panama joins shorebird reserve network

The Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network (WHSRN) is a partnership of organisations protecting shorebirds and their habitats across the Americas. The Upper Bay of Panama is important to at least seven species, including Western Sandpiper *Calidris mauri*, and, is visited by over two million waders migrating between North and South America each year. It is already a Ramsar site and Important Bird Area and has now become the first Central American WHSRN site, with the management organisers ANAM (the National Environment Authority of Panama) and the Panama Audubon Society joining as WHSRN partners.

- *World Birdwatch* 27 (4): 5 (December 2005)

SOUTH AMERICA

BRAZIL

New hope for Red-tailed Parrot conservation

The Brazilian NGO Sociedade de Pesquisa em Vida Selvagem e Educação Ambiental (SPVS) has been involved in work to conserve the globally threatened Red-tailed Parrot *Amazona brasiliensis* since 1997. In partnership with Audi Brazil, who have donated BR\$100,000 (c.GBP£25,000) for the year 2005, SPVS has recently been promoting a number new initiatives to preserve this range-restricted parrot, which is found only in the littoral of São Paulo, Paraná and Santa Catarina states. One of these already appears to be paying dividends. Between the start of 2004 and June 2005, SPVS

erected 30 artificial nests for *A. brasiliensis*, of which 80% had been utilised.

- *Terra da Gente* 15 (July 2005): 62–63.

CHILE

Pulp mill destroys internationally important wetland

Black-necked Swans *Cygnus melancoryphus* have died in huge numbers at the Carlos Anwandter Nature Sanctuary, a Ramsar wetland that formerly held their largest Chilean nesting population (more than 5,000 individuals). The catastrophe, which affected similar numbers of other waterbirds, has been attributed to a massive die-off of the swans' main food plant *Egeria densa*, caused—at least in part—by contaminants from a pulp mill 32 km upstream. A local group, formed in response to the disaster, 'Acción por los Cisnes', have run a publicity campaign that has captured a level of public attention thought unprecedented for an environmental issue in Chile. The Valdivia regional authorities temporarily closed the plant in early 2005, and proposed ecotoxicological monitoring, new water-quality regulations and an environmental management plan for the río Cruces. Following the mill's re-opening, WWF organised investigation and negotiation teams, and are pressing the government and the owners to implement these plans more rapidly and to remediate the existing damage, but could find only four *C. melancoryphus* in the core area of the reserve. They have made a number of recommendations aimed to identify ways to secure both the viability of the ecosystem and the social and economic productivity of the mill.

- WWF (2005) Pulp mill devastates swan sanctuary in Chile. Available at: www.panda.org/about_wwf/where_we_work/latin_america_and_caribbean/news/index.cfm?uNewsID=51180 [accessed 26/12/05]; WWF (2005) *Informe de Observaciones y*

Recomendaciones. Misión Internacional de Evaluación de WWF ante la controversia del Santuario de la Naturaleza y sitio Ramsar Carlos Anwandter y la planta de celulosa Valdivia de CELCO. Available at: http://assets.panda.org/download/s/final_wwf_rio_cruces_report_sp_anish.pdf [accessed 26/12/05]

Oil spill on the Chilean coast

On 31 October, a cargo vessel registered in Hong Kong and ironically named *Eider* ran aground off Antofagasta, in northern Chile. A large amount of its fuel and lubricants were discharged and c.7 km of coastline has been directly affected by the resultant slick. The authorities have used floating booms, dispersants and degreasers to try to reduce the impacts and spread them more thinly (but widely). This stretch of coast is of global importance for Humboldt Penguin *Spheniscus humboldti*, Peruvian Booby *Sula variegata*, Brown Pelican *Pelecanus occidentalis*, various cormorants, gulls and terns, and Green Turtles *Chelonia mydas*. Over 100 pelicans, gulls and cormorants have been seen oiled or rescued, and more casualties were expected.

- BirdLife International (2005) Fuel spill on Chilean coast. Available at: <http://www.birdlife.org/news/news/2005/11/chile.html> [accessed 26/12/05]

COLOMBIA

Cerulean Warbler bird reserve

Donors Robert Giles and Dorothy Welch have enabled local NGO Proaves to purchase 200 ha of subtropical forest along the río Chucurí, dpto. Santander, where Cerulean Warbler *Dendroica cerulea* overwinters in exceptional densities. This is the first South American reserve to be established for a North American songbird. The site is also thought to be the global stronghold for Gorgeted Wood-quail *Odontophorus striophum* and holds two other Critically Endangered species: Mountain Grackle *Macroagelaius*

subalaris and Chestnut-bellied Hummingbird *Amazilia castaneiventris*. Cerulean Warbler has declined by over 70% in 40 years as a result of habitat destruction in its breeding and wintering ranges.

- Paul Salaman *in litt.* 23 August 2005

ECUADOR

Three hundred Galápagos Petrel nests found

Exhaustive surveys for Galápagos Petrel *Pterodroma phaeopygia* have located c.300 new nests on Santa Cruz. The largest of the new colonies was found within a national park, and is now benefitting from a programme to reduce the impact of invasive species.

- Galápagos Conservation Trust (2005) More Galapagos Petrels discovered. *Charles Darwin Res. Station News Bull.* (November 2005). Available at: http://www.gct.org/nov05_2.html [accessed 26/12/05]

Government may renege on albatross treaty

The Ecuadorian government, one of the few to have ratified the Agreement on the Conservation of Albatross and Petrels, has stated that it may permit longline fishing in the Galápagos Islands, risking non-compliance with the treaty. Longline fishing would have a very high impact on turtles and sharks, and could affect the Vulnerable Waved Albatross *Phoebastria irrorata* breeding colonies there.

- *World Birdwatch* 27 (2): 5 (June 2005)

More threatened birds in Jorupe reserve

Surveys at Jorupe, part of the Jatunpamba-Jorupe reserve, in which the Fundación Jocotoco has a 40% stake, have found two further threatened species, bringing the total to eight. The reserve consists of dry deciduous forest, dominated by *Ceiba* trees, and is designed to protect the local watershed, as well as its rich

Tumbesian endemic flora and fauna, in an area under threat from clearance and heavy grazing of the understorey. New discoveries include Slaty Becard *Pachyrhamphus spodiurus* and Grey-backed Hawk *Leucopternis occidentalis* (both Endangered), and Black-and-white Tanager *Conothraupis speculigera* (Near Threatened).

- *World Birdwatch* 27 (2): 5 (June 2005)

FRENCH GUIANA

New rarity committee in South America

Eight ornithologists have established the French Guianan Rarity Committee (Comité d'Homologation Ornithologique de Guyane). The aim is to validate each new, rare or vagrant species reported in French Guiana. A report will be published annually. For a list of species to be

considered, e-mail the Committee's Secretary, Alexandre Renaudier (alex.renaudier@wanadoo.fr), who is also the contact point for submissions and decisions.