

## The juvenile of the Rufous-faced Crake *Laterallus xenopterus*

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Nós descrevemos o jovem da sanã-de-cara-ruiva *Laterallus xenopterus* baseado em um espécime capturado em uma armadilha para pequenos mamíferos montada em um campo hidromórfico nos arredores de uma vereda na Fazenda Jacaré-Riachão (18°38'S 45°04'W; 620 m), município de Felixlândia, Minas Gerais, Brasil. O espécime foi taxidermizado e depositado na coleção ornitológica do Departamento de Zoologia da Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais (DZUFMG 4535). Sua plumagem difere da do adulto por ser predominantemente escura. Entretanto, o exemplar apresenta alguns caracteres diagnósticos da plumagem adulta, como as penas marrom-avermelhadas na cabeça e nos lados do pescoço, penas amareladas na garganta e no peito, abdômen esbranquiçado e flancos barrados de negro, além do barramento branco nas coberteiras superiores das asas.

Rufous-faced Crake *Laterallus xenopterus* is one of the least-known South American rails<sup>13</sup>. Described in 1934 from a single specimen taken at Horqueta, Paraguay<sup>3</sup>, it was only rediscovered in the 1970s, when four specimens were collected in Curuguaty, Paraguay and one in Brasília National Park, Brazil<sup>8,12,13</sup>. Subsequently, *L. xenopterus* has been recorded at several isolated localities in Brazil, Bolivia and Paraguay, suggesting that its range is much wider than previously known<sup>1,2,4-6,9-11,14-17</sup>. As juvenile plumage is unknown<sup>13</sup>, we describe here a juvenile specimen from Minas Gerais, south-east Brazil.

The bird was caught on 24 July 2004 in a small-mammal trap set in dense grassland surrounding a vereda palm grove, at Fazenda Jacaré-Riachão (18°38'S 45°04'W; 620 m), Felixlândia municipality, Minas Gerais<sup>15</sup>. The grassland type where the bird was caught is locally known as *campo hidromórfico*. The area was not flooded, had firm soil and the vegetation comprised dense clumps of native grasses (Poaceae), many Cyperaceae and sparse *Eryngium* sp. (Apiaceae). The vereda was flooded and comprised several *buriti* palms *Mauritia flexuosa* (Arecaceae). The bird was found dead inside the trap, prepared as a specimen and deposited in the ornithological collection of the Department of Zoology, Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais, Belo Horizonte (DZUFMG 4535). The specimen, with its predominantly blackish plumage and white belly, could not be identified from the existing literature<sup>13</sup> or through comparison with those Rallidae in the Museu de Zoologia da Universidade de São Paulo (MZUSP), Museu de História Natural de Taubaté (MHNT), Museu Paraense Emílio Goeldi, Belém (MPEG) and American Museum of Natural History, New York (AMNH). Photographs of the specimen were sent to Drs Storrs L. Olson and Barry Taylor, who identified it as a juvenile *L. xenopterus* based on the characters presented in Vasconcelos *et al.*<sup>15</sup>.

The following plumage description is based on Munsell *Soil color charts*<sup>7</sup>. Measurements were taken with digital callipers. The specimen is illustrated in Figs. 1–3.

Top of head and occiput black (10YR 2/1); postocular and auriculars black (10YR 2/1) with some dark reddish-brown feathers (5YR 3/4); malar region black (10YR 2/1) washed olive grey (5Y 5/2.5); chin light grey (5Y 6.5/1); throat light grey (5Y 6.5/1) with some olive-yellow (2.5Y 6/6) feathers at the base. Nape black (10YR 2/1) washed very dark brown (10YR 2/2); hindneck and mantle black (10YR 2/1); rump very dark grey (10YR 2.5/1); uppertail-coverts and tail black (10YR 2/1). Foreneck dark grey (10YR 3.5/1) washed yellowish brown (10YR 5/8); neck-sides very dark grey (10YR 2.5/1) with some dark reddish-brown feathers (5YR 3/4); breast-sides black (10YR 2/1) with dark reddish-brown feathers (5YR 3/4), becoming grey (10YR 4.5/1) in the centre of breast and a single yellowish-brown feather (10YR 5/6) on the lower breast; belly white (5Y 8/1) to pale yellow (5Y 8/1.5), barred brown (7.5YR 4/2), very dark brown (10YR 2/2) and black (10YR 2/1); body-sides black (10YR 2/1); flanks black (10YR 2/1) barred white (Gley Chart 1 8/N); vent predominantly black (10YR 2/1) with tips dark brown (10YR 3/3); undertail-coverts black (10YR 2/1) barred white (Gley Chart 1 8/N); thighs greyish brown (10YR 5/2) washed light grey (10YR 7/1). Bend of wing black (10YR 2/1); upperwing-coverts black (10YR 2/1) barred white (Gley Chart 1 8/N); remiges black (10YR 2/1); underwing-coverts very dark grey (10YR 3/1) barred white (Gley Chart 1 8/N).

The skull was only 15% pneumatized, which also indicates it was a juvenile. The specimen had a blackish bill and dark reddish tarsi. The irides colour could not be determined, as the bird had died some hours before it was found. When collected, it weighed 35 g and measured as follows (in mm): wingspan: 284; total length: 178; wing



Figure 1. Ventral view of the juvenile *Laterallus xenopterus* (DZUFMG 4535), showing the yellowish feathers appearing on the throat and breast (Carlos Henrique de Faria Vasconcelos)



Figure 2. Lateral view of the juvenile *Laterallus xenopterus* (DZUFMG 4535), showing dark reddish-brown feathers appearing in the postocular region, auriculars and neck- and breast-sides (Carlos Henrique de Faria Vasconcelos)



Figure 3. Dorsal view of the juvenile *Laterallus xenopterus* (DZUFMG 4535), showing the white-barred upperwing-coverts (Carlos Henrique de Faria Vasconcelos)



Figure 4. Ventral view of an adult *Laterallus xenopterus* (MNRJ 32661) collected in Brasília National Park, showing yellowish feathers in the throat and breast, the dark reddish-brown neck- and breast-sides, and white-barred undertail-coverts (Carlos Rodrigo Meirelles Abreu)

(unflattened): 85.77; tail: 50.92; tarsus: 27.08; culmen (total): 17.99; nares-tip: 8.39. Mass is lighter than reported for adults<sup>12,13</sup>. Other measurements fall inside the range of adult *L. xenopterus*, except tarsus, which is slightly shorter in the juvenile, and culmen, which is slightly longer in the juvenile<sup>3,8,12,13</sup>. Nevertheless, there are few specimens of *L. xenopterus*<sup>3,8,12,13</sup> and it is possible that these measurements will fall inside the range of adults if more specimens become available.

The dark reddish-brown feathers (5YR 3/4) in the postocular region, the auriculars, and neck- and breast-sides; the olive-yellow throat feathers (2.5Y 6/6); and the yellowish-brown feather (10YR 5/6) in the lower breast are typical of adult *L. xenopterus* (Fig. 4), indicating that the bird had commenced moult to adult plumage. Furthermore, the whitish bars in the upperwing-coverts are also typical of the species. The undertail-coverts pattern, with black

feathers barred white, agrees with the descriptions of Brace *et al.*<sup>1</sup> and Lowen *et al.*<sup>6</sup>, but not Myers & Hansen<sup>8</sup> and Storer<sup>12</sup>, who described this region as being entirely black. Many small rails, including other *Laterallus*, have a plain, dark brown or black post-natal plumage<sup>13</sup>. Some species, such as *L. melanophaius*, *L. ruber* and *L. albigularis*, possess a very dark, plain first plumage (B. Taylor *in litt.* 2005), making the juvenile Rufous-faced Crake's plumage consistent with what is known for the genus.

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