



Figure 1. Map showing records of Blue Grosbeak *Passerina caerulea* in South America and the former Netherlands Antilles.

A Blue Grosbeak *Passerina caerulea* in north-east Colombia

On 13 March 2011, we observed a Blue Grosbeak *Passerina caerulea* near the Caribbean between Ciénaga and Santa Marta, Colombia (11°02'15"N 74°12'57"W; 10–20 m). The observation was made on the Dole–Papare / La Playita Road, which leads to a coal processing facility, c.1.8 km from Highway 90. At c.09h00 the grosbeak was spotted in an area of scrub, at c.75 m distance perched atop a bush, with the sun behind us. All of us observed the bird through a telescope before it flew off. It could not be relocated and no photographs were taken.

Four of us are familiar with the species from Mexico and North America. The bird was a female or immature, being warm brown overall with two very distinct chestnut wingbars. It appeared larger than a Blue-black Grassquit *Volatinia jacarina* and smaller than a Rose-breasted Grosbeak *Pheucticus ludovicianus*. The finch-like bill was dark and large. There were no face markings or streaking on the back. The

underparts were uniform brown, with no evidence of blue. The chestnut wingbars and size permitted confident exclusion of possible confusion species, such as female Blue-black *Cyanocompsa cyanoides* and Ultramarine Grosbeaks *C. brissonii*, and Great-billed *Oryzoborus maximiliani* and Large-billed Seed Finches *O. crassirostris*. In addition to lacking wingbars, Blue-black Grassquit is smaller with streaked underparts. Indigo Bunting *Passerina cyanea* is smaller overall; it has smudgy streaking on the breast, and its wingbars are not chestnut, but less distinct and pale.

Blue Grosbeak is a boreal migrant that breeds in North America as far north as southern New York and southern North Dakota, and west to central California. In Middle America, it breeds in Mexico south to Costa Rica⁵. Blue Grosbeak winters in Middle America south to central Panama, where it is a rare winter visitor. The species is unknown in Panama east or south of the Canal Zone⁹ (K. Allaire pers. comm. 2011). Blue Grosbeaks from eastern North America probably migrate across the Gulf of Mexico to Central America⁵. They are rare migrants on several Caribbean islands, including Jamaica, Puerto Rico, the US Virgin Islands⁷, Guadeloupe and Barbados².

There are four previous records of Blue Grosbeak in mainland

South America: two each in Colombia and Ecuador (see Fig. 1). The first mainland Colombian record involved a specimen collected by M. A. Carriker on 4 April 1942, at 1,600 m in the Perijá Mountains, south-east of Codazzi, dpto. Cesar (held at the Smithsonian Institution, Washington, USNM 375361)⁴. The second Colombian record was a sighting by Gochfeld *et al.*³ on 18 April 1973, east of Buenaventura, on the Pacific coastal plain. In Ecuador a female was collected along the Río Napo on 1 December 1964⁵ and a male was photographed by Brinkhuizen *et al.*¹ near Hoja Blanca, Esmeraldas, on 1 August 2009. In addition, a female was photographed on Bonaire, off the coast of Venezuela, on 14–20 November 1983⁶. The species has also been recorded on Isla San Andrés, politically part of Colombia, though 700 km north of mainland Colombia, in the Caribbean Sea¹⁰.

Acknowledgements

We thank Diego Calderón and Trevor Ellery for encouraging us to publish this report. Thomas Donegan offered very helpful comments on the submitted version of the manuscript. As usual, we sought the assistance of Larry McQueen, who helped us to prepare the first draft.

References

1. Brinkhuizen, D. M., Velasco, D. L., Obiol, J. F., Rodriguez, G., Ganuza, J. A. & Seitz, L. (2011) First record of Blue Grosbeak *Passerina caerulea* in western Ecuador. *Cotinga* 33: 127.
2. Buckley, P. A., Massiah, E. B., Hutt, M. B., Buckley, F. G. & Hutt, H. F. (2009) *The birds of Barbados: an annotated checklist*. Peterborough: British Ornithologists' Union & British Ornithologists' Club.
3. Gochfeld, M., Gochfeld, R., Kleinbaum, M. & Tudor, G. (1974) Sight record of a Blue Grosbeak (*Passerina caerulea*) in Colombia. *Amer. Birds* 28: 958.
4. Hilty, S. L. & Brown, W. L. (1986) *A guide to the birds of Colombia*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
5. Lowther, P. E. & Ingold, J. L. (2011) Blue Grosbeak (*Passerina caerulea*). In: *The Birds of North America Online*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell Lab of Ornithology <http://bna.birds.cornell.edu/bna/species/079doi:10.2173/bna.79> (accessed 8 October 2011)
6. Prins, T. J., Reuter, J. H., Debrot, A. O., Wattel, J. & Nijman, V. (2009) Checklist of the birds of Aruba, Curaçao and Bonaire, south Caribbean. *Ardea* 97: 137–268.
7. Raffaele, H., Wiley, J., Garrido, O., Keith, A. & Raffaele, J. (1998) *Birds of the West Indies*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
8. Ridgely, R. S. & Greenfield, P. J. (2001) *The birds of Ecuador*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
9. Ridgely, R. S. & Gwynne, J. A. (1989) *A guide to the birds of Panama, with Costa Rica, Nicaragua, and Honduras*. Second edn. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
10. Salaman, P. G. W., Donegan, T. M. & Caro, D. (2010) *Checklist of the birds of Colombia*. Bogotá: Fundación ProAves.

Dennis Arendt

2024 Friendly Street, Eugene, Oregon, USA. E-mail: dbarendt@comcast.net.

Roger Robb

2507 Walnut Ridge Drive, Springfield, Oregon, USA. E-mail: brrobb@comcast.net.

Kit Larsen

2150 Kincaid, Eugene, Oregon, USA. E-mail: kit@uoregon.edu.

Lelis Navarette

E-mail: lelisl@andinannet.net.

Jim Regali

1499 Regency, Eugene, Oregon, USA. E-mail: jjregali@comcast.net.

Received 6 August 2011; final revision accepted 16 October 2011 (published online 10 March 2012)