

Noteworthy bird records from the Santa Elena Peninsula and coastal south-west Ecuador

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Realizamos registros en diversas localidades del suroccidente de Ecuador durante censos mensuales en las piscinas artificiales de Ecuasal, en las costas de la provincia de Santa Elena y en el archipiélago de Jambelí, provincia de El Oro. Este estudio presenta nuevos registros geográficos de especies raras en el suroccidente de Ecuador y contribuye al conocimiento de la distribución de las aves en Ecuador continental. Se presenta el primer registro fotográfico de la Aguja Canela *Limosa fedoa*, se evidencia la presencia de la Agachona Chica *Thinocorus rumicivorus* (un vagrante raro en Ecuador) y se presenta el registro más al sur que existe en Sudamérica del Gaviotín Piquirrojo *Hydroprogne caspia*.

In August 2008 and June 2010–February 2012, we surveyed the aquatic avifauna of various localities in south-west Ecuador, including the artificial salt lakes belonging to the Ecuasal Company, the beaches and fishing ports of prov. Santa Elena, and the Jambelí archipelago, prov. El Oro. Here we present noteworthy bird records from this work. Species classification follows Remsen *et al.*¹¹.

Northern Shoveler *Anas clypeata*

An adult male in breeding plumage was photographed with White-cheeked Pintails *A. bahamensis* at Ecuasal salt lakes, north of San Pablo, prov. Santa Elena, on 25 February 2012 (Fig. 1). Head, neck and throat dark metallic green contrasting with white underparts and dark upperparts. Flanks and belly chestnut, with white tail and dark undertail-coverts; yellow iris, black spatulate bill and orange legs. Very rare boreal migrant to Ecuador, most of the few records are from Ecuasal, except one at La Segua marsh, prov. Manabí, on 3 March 2007⁵. At Ecuasal it was

recorded on 29 February 1988 (P. Shepherd & A. Marshall)¹², with a male on 20 January 2007 (R. S. Ridgely & B. Haase), another on 21 February 2010⁶, and a record of seven in January 2008 (R. S. Ridgely & F. Sornoza)⁶. Recently in 2011, it has been recorded for the first time in Galápagos, on Isabela⁹. *A. clypeata* breeds widely in the Holarctic and, in the Western Hemisphere, usually wintering between the southern USA and Colombia⁸.

Slate-coloured Coot *Fulica ardesiaca*

Singles on 26 June 2011 (AEÁ, RV & K. Balón) and 1 September 2011 (AEÁ) at Pacoa salt lakes. An Andean species of the central and northern cordilleras, at 2,200–3,900 m¹¹ and a common resident in coastal Peru^{1,2,4}, in south-west Ecuador a population was discovered by R. S. Ridgely in 1991 at José Velasco Ibarra dam, Santa Elena Peninsula; two years later, a max. 200, including young, were counted there¹². This dam of 424 ha is dependent on rainwater and has been dry since 2008. *F. ardesiaca* is very scarce on the Santa Elena



Figure 1. Male Northern Shoveler *Anas clypeata*, Ecuasal salt lakes, Pacoa, prov. Santa Elena, Ecuador, February 2012 (R. Villón)



Figure 2. Adult Marbled Godwit *Limosa fedoa*, Mar Bravo, Salinas, prov. Santa Elena, Ecuador, August 2008 (A. E. Ágreda)

Peninsula and in south-west Ecuador, although singles were observed annually in 2003–06 at Ecuasal and up to 16 were present on 16 February 2007 at El Azúcar dam⁶. This permanent reservoir of 350 ha, 20 km from Pacoa, is part of a hydraulic system for water transfer and could provide suitable habitat.

Marbled Godwit *Limosa fedoa*

On 29 August 2008 an adult was photographed (Fig. 2) in a salt pond at Mar Bravo, Salinas (AEÁ, F. Hernández-Baquero), foraging in shallow water with other shorebirds, including Short-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus griseus*, Semipalmated Sandpiper *Calidris pusilla*, Wilson's Phalarope *Phalaropus tricolor* and Lesser Yellowlegs *Tringa flavipes*. Very rare boreal migrant to coastal Ecuador: the first record was a single at Ecuasal in February 1980¹² with a second in January 2001 at the same locality (F. Hernández-Baquero pers. comm.). Fig. 2 represents the first modern documentation for the species in Ecuador³. Several records in prov. Manabí province are present in the Ecuadorian Committee for Ornithological Records (CERO) database.

Least Seedsnipe *Thinocorus rumicivorus*

On 23 May 2011 an adult male at Ecuasal salt lakes, Pacoa (AEÁ). Identification was based on the following: small, chunky body and short legs, head and upperparts brown with yellowish fringes to feathers, pale overall appearance, face, neck-sides and breast grey contrasting slightly with rest of white underparts, two black stripes from throat-sides form central stripe on upper breast, separating again on lower breast and disappearing on flanks. In flight, black flight feathers and axillaries, and white underwing-coverts. Iris dark and bill short and yellowish. Photographs were taken but are of insufficient quality to be published. Known in Ecuador from specimens taken on the Santa Elena Peninsula in January–February 1898¹². Marchant¹⁰

reported a party of c.8 birds in April 1954 that he 'believed were this species', while two were observed by T. Davis on 11 July 1974 near Salinas¹². On 26 February 2003 an adult male was photographed near Ecuasal salt lakes at Mar Bravo (B. Riera & L. Navarrete)⁶. Records in Ecuador probably correspond to *T. r. cuneicauda* which is resident in northern Peru^{7,12}. Ridgely & Greenfield¹² suggest a resident breeding population exists (at least formerly) based on the two immatures collected in 1898, but two expeditions from the American Museum of Natural History in the early 1900s already failed to find the species at Santa Elena³. We consider that the species is best considered a vagrant to Ecuador.

Andean Lapwing *Vanellus resplendens*

On 27 May 2011, two were photographed by RWVV, BJSM & K. Balón at the Santo Domingo estuary, San Pablo, prov. Santa Elena (Fig. 3). They were with several Grey-headed *Chroicocephalus cirrocephalus* and Laughing Gulls *Leucophaeus atricilla*, Elegant *Thalasseus elegans*, Sandwich *T. sandvicensis*, Royal *T. maximus* and Gull-billed



Figure 3. Pair of Andean Lapwings *Vanellus resplendens*, Santo Domingo estuary, San Pablo, prov. Santa Elena, Ecuador, May 2011 (B. Suárez)



Figure 4. Adult Caspian Tern *Hydroprogne caspia*, Jambelí archipelago, prov. El Oro, Ecuador, January 2012 (A. Ágreda)

Terns *Gelocheledon nilotica*. Andean Lapwing is extremely rare in lowland Ecuador, with all records being recent. Our sighting is the third on the Santa Elena Peninsula, with previous records by Haase⁶, on 30 June 2003 at Ecuasal salt lakes and 16 July 2004 at El Azúcar dam, prov. Santa Elena.

Caspian Tern *Hydroprogne caspia*

On 19 January 2012 during a visit to the Jambelí archipelago, prov. El Oro, AEA & RWVV observed and photographed (Fig. 4) an adult in winter plumage, on a sandbar 50 m away, together with Laughing Gulls *Leucophaeus atricilla*, Royal Thalasseus *maximus* and Sandwich Terns *T. sanduicensis*. The *H. caspia* was larger than the other birds, with a heavy blood-red bill tipped blackish, and black-streaked forehead and crown. Accidental visitor to the coast of Manabí, with a previous record from the Chone area, on 30 July 1996 by S. N. G. Howell¹². Ours is the second, and the southernmost report in western South America.

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