

NBC Conservation Awards update

Compiled by Christopher J. Sharpe and Rob Clay

Excitingly, the Neotropical Bird Club Conservation Awards Programme continues to grow, both in the amount of funds the NBC is able to grant and the number of proposals received. The organisers of the Programme share highlights of the bird-conservation work delivered.

The Neotropical Bird Club Conservation Awards Programme (NBC CAP) continues to finance some of the most exciting bird conservation projects in the region, and we are privileged to be able to support highly experienced professionals with well-established track records in bird conservation, as well as promising early-career individuals. We are very grateful for the ongoing support of the March Conservation Fund of Tides Foundation, which continues to be a major contributor to the NBC Conservation Fund, especially to Ivan Samuels who also plays an active role in project evaluation. For the second year running, we received a generous donation in memory of Roger Lewis Jones, specifically to support projects in southeast Brazil, which enabled us to make an additional grant available to SAVE Brasil for vital work to conserve the recently rediscovered Blue-eyed Ground Dove *Columbina*

cyanopis. As usual, awards of \$1,500, \$3,000 and \$5,000 were available.

2018 awards

Our January 2018 awards round received 20 applications. Twelve were subject to detailed evaluation, all but one of which were submitted to NBC Council with four successfully obtaining NBC CAP funding to a total of \$12,000. Some 32 proposals were received for our July 2018 round: 25 were subject to detailed evaluation, 12 of which were submitted to NBC Council with half successfully obtaining NBC CAP funding totalling \$18,500. The total amount disbursed during 2018 was therefore \$30,500. The ten projects financed are summarised in the box below.

PROJECTS FUNDED BY THE NBC CONSERVATION AWARDS PROGRAMME DURING 2018

- Non-traditional conservation schemes to protect pine-oak forests and habitats for endangered Neotropical-Nearctic migratory and resident bird species in Chiapas, Mexico, with an emphasis on the Endangered Golden-cheeked Warbler *Setophaga chrysoparia*. Emerenciano Rivera Rivera. Awarded \$1,500.
- Status, ecology and conservation of the Antioquia Brushfinch *Atlapetes blancae* in northern Antioquia, Colombia. Yohana Andrea Lopera Salazar. Awarded \$3,000.
- Distribution, occupation and priority areas for the conservation of Yellow-headed Manakin *Chloropipo flavicapilla* in the Eastern Andes of Colombia. Néstor Raúl Espejo Delgado. Awarded \$3,000.
- Conservation of the Critically Endangered Blue-eyed Ground Dove *Columbina cyanopis* in the Brazilian Cerrado. Albert Gallon de Aguiar. Awarded \$5,000.
- Defining the optimal conservation stronghold for the Critically Endangered Horned Curassow *Pauxi unicornis* in Bolivia. Bennett Hennessey. Awarded \$3,000.
- An update on the current threats and conservation status of 'crested' eagles in north Argentina. Facundo Barbar. Awarded \$3,000.
- How do threatened bamboo specialists [White-bearded Antshrike *Biatas nigropectus*, Temminck's Seedeater *Sporophila falcirostris* & Purple-winged Ground-dove *Claravis geoffroyi*] respond to mass flowering and die-off of *Guadua trinii* bamboo [in Argentina]? Kristina Cockle. Awarded \$3,000.
- Action to conserve the Endangered Iberá Seedeater *Sporophila iberaensis* in Paraguay. Tatiana Galluppi Selich. Awarded \$3,000.
- Nest sites and conservation of Ringed Storm Petrel *Oceanodroma (Hydrobates) hornbyi* in the Atacama Desert, Chile. Fernando Medrano Martínez. Awarded \$3,000.
- Colony Guardians for the Saffron-cowled Blackbird *Xanthopsar flavus* [in Argentina]. María Florencia Pucheta. Awarded \$3,000.

Updates from past awards

The following summary highlights achievements from projects that NBC has already funded, as judged by the recipients.

Black-capped Petrel in Dominican Republic

Foraging habitat of the Endangered Black-capped Petrel Pterodroma hasitata: using spatial ecology to inform conservation. \$2,989. Project dates: April–December 2018.

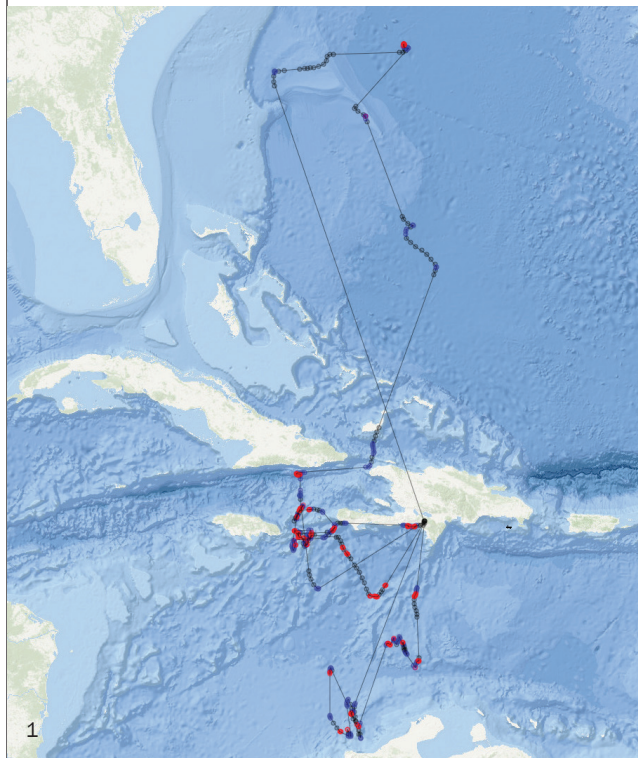
A gadfly petrel endemic to the Caribbean, Black-capped Petrel *Pterodroma hasitata* has a fragmented and declining population and is considered Endangered throughout its range. In its marine habitat, this seabird is exposed to many threats including fisheries activity, offshore energy development, marine pollution and climate change. Our understanding of the species's habitat preferences and associated threats to its survival are limited by the current lack of information on its foraging ecology. Therefore, with funding from the Neotropical Bird Club and BirdsCaribbean, we aimed to gather fine-scale data on movements of individual Black-capped Petrels breeding in the Sierra de Bahoruco, Dominican Republic, and to study their diet through a molecular analysis of faecal DNA.

In April 2018, we travelled to the high mountains of the Sierra de Bahoruco where petrels nest in underground burrows. Since 2010, more than 45 sparsely distributed burrows have been discovered in this area, 30 km inland and 2000 m in elevation. Using one-way traps, we captured 12 chick-rearing adults as they came back at night to feed their chick. We equipped nine with remote-download GPS loggers taped to tail feathers and collected faeces for later analysis of prey DNA. We also deployed three base-stations near clusters of nests to download and store track data from foraging petrels upon their return to nest sites.

Three of the nine loggers transmitted data to the base-stations and recorded foraging trips lasting from 8–11 days and covering distances of 2,000–4,000 km. Two petrels occupied waters in the Caribbean Sea for the duration of their foraging trip while the third travelled to Gulf Stream waters off the United States coast. Foraging behaviour appeared to be associated with physical processes such as the Guajira upwelling off Colombia and water temperature fronts in the Gulf Stream. These two areas are subject to the greatest fishing effort from the commercial longline fishery – a conservation concern for the species. While our results showed differences in individual choices of foraging areas,

they confirmed the findings of Jodice *et al.* (2015) that petrels utilise the Caribbean basin frequently. Use of Gulf-Stream waters in the western North Atlantic was not common in either our study or that of Jodice *et al.* (2015). The data collected from GPS tags provide an opportunity to examine at-sea behaviour and flight paths in more detail than previously possible. Interestingly, in two instances tagged petrels rested at sea close to the coasts of Haiti (where most petrel colonies are located) and Cuba (where it is suspected that Black-capped Petrels might nest); this behaviour is consistent with 'coastal rafting' in which individuals sit in a tight flock on the water near breeding colonies, waiting for dusk to come ashore. We also found that tracked petrels returned to the colony at night and that one did so by following the general path of a river bed.

We are assessing the performance of the GPS loggers and attempting to determine why data were not transmitted from six of the nine tags. It may be that restrictive battery capacity due to their small size combined with relatively long foraging trips and nest visits of short duration (petrels stay only a few minutes at their burrow) may have limited



1 Movements of GPS-tracked Black-capped Petrels *Pterodroma hasitata*, colour-coded by behaviour, where grey = transit, red = rest, and blue = foraging (Yvan Satgé).

the connection between tags and base-stations. Although only three loggers functioned, we still were able to add new information to our understanding of their foraging behaviour and therefore continue to enhance our knowledge of the species. This expedition also allowed us to build capacity of staff at the conservation NGO Grupo Jaragua and to strengthen research collaboration. In summary, our data reinforced the necessity to continue to evaluate threats associated with fisheries and those associated with urban lighting and terrestrial wind farms near flight paths to and from colonies. Over the coming months, we will analyse the faecal samples to assess the petrel's diet and to better estimate threats associated with longline fisheries. For further information, see birdscaribbean.org/2018/07/flying-with-the-devil-part-i-on-the-ridge.

Ernst Rupp, Yvan Satgé and Patrick Jodice

REFERENCE

Jodice P. G. R., Ronconi, R. A., Rupp, E., Wallace, G. E. & Satgé, Y. (2015) First satellite tracks of the Endangered black-capped petrel. *Endangered Species Res.* 26: 23–33.

Grenadian birds of conservation concern

Distribution, diversity, and abundance of Grenadian birds, including endemic and restricted-range species. US\$1,500. Project dates: January 2017–December 2018.

Grenada is a small tropical island located at the extreme southern end of the Lesser Antilles chain in the Caribbean. It hosts 35 documented species of resident landbirds including the Endangered Grenada Hook-billed Kite *Chondrohierax uncinatus mirus*, the Critically Endangered Grenada Dove *Leptotila wellsi*, the near-endemic Grenada flycatcher *Myiarchus nugator*, and the regional endemic Lesser Antillean Tanager *Tangara cucullata*.

Unfortunately, the island lacks detailed bird surveys, and very little is known about the conservation status of restricted-range and endemic species. The island is undergoing rapid economic and land-use changes that may affect the conservation status of Grenada's birds. This study therefore aimed to identify birds or bird habitat in Grenada of conservation concern, to help develop proper management plans for existing protected areas, to help identify habitat types and requirements for related bird species across the Caribbean, and to collect baseline data for future research in Grenada.

A NBC Conservation Award was granted in 2017 to conduct avian research on Grenada. However, thanks to additional funding from Birds Caribbean (David S. Lee Fund for the Conservation of Caribbean Birds), we were able to extend our



2 Ramon Williams and Udy Fredrick effecting outreach programme with Lesterre Roman Catholic School, Grenada, September 2017 (John Holas).

field research to the two sister islands in the Lesser Antilles (Carriacou and Petite Martinique), and three offshore islands (Ronde, Caille, and Hog Islands). Funding also enabled us to implement an outreach programme, helping primary and secondary students to identify birds.

Across the islands overall, we conducted 488 point-counts across 54 sites (eight-plus point-counts per site) at dusk or dawn. We also recorded habitat type and land-use at each point. Sufficient data were obtained to analyse 23 bird species. We calculated the density and abundance of each species across the islands and compared them to the main island, Grenada. The next step in this project is to make distribution maps of each species analysed and finish writing up the manuscript for publication.

Ramon Williams

Declining insectivorous birds in Brazilian Amazonia

Does microclimate change explain observed declines of terrestrial insectivores? US\$3,920. Project dates: May 2017–19 (ongoing).

The year 2019 will mark the 40th anniversary of the establishment of one of the world's most important tropical ecology research sites, the Biological Dynamics of Forest Fragments Project near Manaus, Brazil. Ever since 1979, ornithologists have captured and banded (ringed) understory birds to track their response to forest fragmentation. Over the years, it became clear that carving up the rainforest into cookie-cutter pieces was bad for most birds, and many species – most strikingly, terrestrial insectivores – disappeared from isolated patches.

Phil Stouffer, Cameron Rutt and I have recently turned our focus away from fragments, instead looking at bird-capture data from control sites over the past four decades. All sites are large, pristine tracts of forest. Surprisingly, we found a disturbing pattern: many fewer terrestrial insectivores were

caught during the past decade than in the early 1980s. Capture rates for species like Wing-banded Antbird *Myrmornis torquata* and Black-tailed Leaf-tosser *Sclerurus caudacutus* have fallen by more than 90%. Nowadays it is a genuine rarity for a birder to stumble across one of these species, something that was reportedly never the case at our study sites. The apparent disappearance of terrestrial insectivores even in seemingly pristine continuous forest is very alarming, and we need to understand what is going on.

That is where our NBC Conservation Award comes in, providing critical funds for the next phase of our research. The 'microclimate hypothesis' (which

3 Jairo Lopes holds a tagged Wing-banded Antbird *Myrmornis torquata* (Biological Dynamics of Forest Fragments Project, Amazonas, Brazil, June 2017), a species whose numbers have declined precipitously at this study site.

4 Roosting Variegated Antpitta *Grallaria varia*, with GPS 'backpack' attached, Biological Dynamics of Forest Fragments Project, Amazonas, Brazil, July 2017.

5 Cabo Frio, Biological Dynamics of Forest Fragments Project, Amazonas, Brazil, July 2018. Substantial areas of *terra firme* forest in Amazonia have been largely untouched by direct anthropogenic disturbance, but are its birds affected by other, more insidious anthropogenic effects?

6 Cabo Frio, Biological Dynamics of Forest Fragments Project, Amazonas, Brazil, July 2017. The domain of the terrestrial insectivores is the relatively cool forest floor, a place reached by less than 5% of sunlight.

Figs. 3–6 by Vitek Jirinec (flickr.com/photos/vitek_jirinec).

argues that terrestrial insectivores may be sensitive to the hotter, drier and brighter conditions of forest fragments, relative to their typical haunts deep in the forest interior) currently lacks unequivocal support, but could explain why terrestrial insectivores are disappearing from seemingly untouched rainforest. Under climate change, the Amazon appears to be getting hotter and drier. If we find that, in contrast to non-vulnerable species, declining birds actively seek cool and wet 'refugia', we might just see a link between the loss of terrestrial insectivores and climate change.

Thanks in part to the generous support of the NBC CAP, we outfitted more than 80 terrestrial insectivorous birds with tiny 'backpacks' carrying sensors that collect environmental data every few minutes for at least a year. Catching such species is hardly easy, but recapturing the same individual a year later to download the collected data is like looking for a musical needle in the rainforest haystack. One Black-tailed Leaf-tosser proved the point, being recaptured 2.4 km from its original capture location. Draw a circle with that radius and that is a lot of forest to comb through without trails. Despite these obstacles, this season we recovered 50% of tags that were deployed last year, which took five months of nearly continuous effort, often using two teams.

The research is ongoing and, although we have lots of data, we have few concrete results to report so far. However, while skimming through the millions of data points we currently have, I can already say that Neotropical birds are doing some interesting things when no one is watching. Let's hope these data provide a clue as to why some of the rarest and most sensitive birds seem to be disappearing from undisturbed primary forest. Although bittersweet, it would be a fitting way to mark the occasion of the project's 40th anniversary.

Vitek Jirinec

Black-fronted Piping Guan in southeast Brazil

Conservation of Black-fronted Piping-Guan Pipile jacutinga in the Brazilian Atlantic Forest through reintroduction and monitoring. \$4,830. Project dates: November 2017–2019 (ongoing).



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7 Captive-bred Black-fronted Piping-Guan *Pipile jacutinga* about to be released, São Francisco Xavier, São José dos Campos, São Paulo, Brazil, October 2018 (Birdwatching Atlantic).

8 Team members monitoring released Black-fronted Piping-Guans *Pipile jacutinga*, São Francisco Xavier, São José dos Campos, São Paulo, Brazil, October 2018 (Alecsandra Tassoni).

The Endangered Black-fronted Piping-Guan has undergone substantial population declines, in response to which SAVE Brasil set up its *Projeto Jacutinga* programme in 2010 (with support from Petrobras in São Paulo and Fundação Grupo Boticário in Rio de Janeiro). The initiative is a reintroduction and monitoring programme, aiming to increase the species's population in southeast Brazil through captive breeding and release of individuals into the wild. The project benefits a species that has an important ecological role, since it swallows fruits whole, so its faeces disperse seeds, which can help the regrowth of forests.

The specific objectives of this project are to: support breeders in the proper husbandry of captive

PUBLICATIONS RESULTING FROM PROJECTS FINANCED

- Bodrati, A. & Cockle, K. L. (2018) Nest, eggs and reproductive biology of Greenish Schiffornis (*Schiffornis virescens*). *Rev. Bras. Orn.* 25: 273–276.
- Bodrati, A., & Cockle, K. L. (2018). Reproductive biology and distribution of the Silky-tailed Nightjar (*Antrostomus sericocaudatus sericocaudatus*) in Argentina. *Orn. Neotrop.* 29: 1–11.
- Bodrati, A. & Cockle, K. L. (2017) Nest predation and interspecific nesting associations involving Plumbeous Kite (*Ictinia plumbea*) and becardas (*Pachyramphus* spp.). *Orn. Neotrop.* 28: 201–207.
- Cockle, K. L. & Bodrati, A. (2017) Divergence in nest placement and parental care of Neotropical foliage-gleaners and treehunters (Furnariidae: Philydorini). *J. Field Orn.* 88: 336–348.
- Cockle, K. L., Bodrati, A., Lammertink, M., Bonaparte, E. B., Ferreyra, C. & Di Sallo, F. G. (2016) Predators of bird nests in the Atlantic forest of Argentina and Paraguay. *Wilson J. Orn.* 128: 120–131.
- Jirinec, V., Elizondo, E. C., Rutt, C. L. & Stouffer, P. C. (2018) Space use, diurnal movement, and roosting of a Variegated Antpitta (*Grallaria varia*) in central Amazonia. *Orn. Neotrop.* 29: 13–20.
- Méndez, D., Marsden, S. & Lloyd, H. (2018) Assessing population size and structure for Andean Condor *Vultur gryphus* in Bolivia using a photographic “capture-recapture” method. *Ibis*. doi: 10.1111/ibi.12681

Black-fronted Piping-Guans for release into the wild; rehabilitate, release and monitor individuals in the wild; and raise awareness of the importance of the conservation of the Piping-Guan and other Atlantic Forest birds to local communities while maintaining the involvement of enforcement and surveillance agencies.

The project is being developed in Reserva Ecológica de Guapiaçu (REGUA, Rio de Janeiro) and in Parque Estadual Serra do Mar and Serra da Mantiqueira (São Paulo). These areas hold continuous tracts of well-preserved forests within the species's original distribution. Since 2016, 20 captive-bred individuals have been released: 12 in Serra da Mantiqueira, six in Serra do Mar and two in REGUA. All released birds are being monitored by satellite or radio transmitters and active field searches, with the active participation of local communities. The NBC Conservation Award (a donation made to the Club in memory of Roger Lewis Jones) was crucial for purchasing an antenna and radio transmitters for monitoring the released birds. In São Francisco Xavier, two females are being monitored daily to

>> CONSERVATION AWARDS

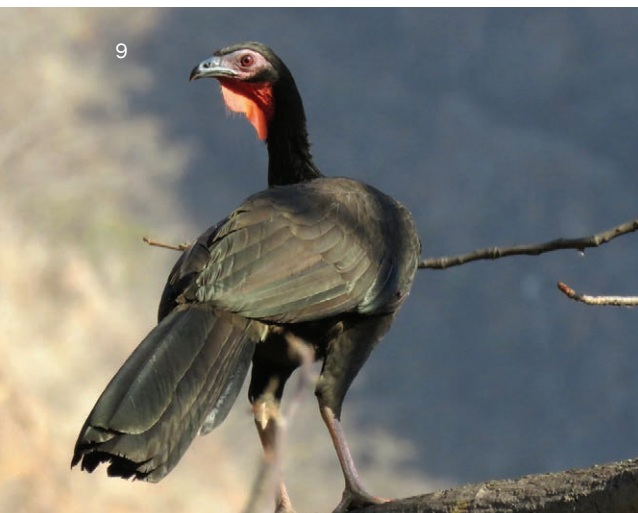
assess their adaptation to the wild. In February 2018, the reintroduced female we called ‘Mangue’, who had paired with a male named ‘Preto’ (released a year earlier), was nesting atop a 6-metre high fern. Mangue incubated two eggs for 17 days, only leaving the nest to feed. However, unfortunately, after heavy rains the eggs were found broken on the ground. This was the first record of nesting by reintroduced birds; it suggests that these animals are adapting to the wild.

Alessandra Tassoni

White-winged Guan in Peru

Until last year, the Endangered White-winged Guan *Penelope albipennis* was one of Peru’s most highly threatened species, in one of the world’s most imperilled families, the Cracidae. Following its discovery in 1876 it was presumed extinct until its rediscovery a century later in 1977. The current population is estimated at perhaps 300 individuals inhabiting dry deciduous forest in ravines in the foothills of the western Andes in a relatively restricted area in northwest Peru. The NBC Conservation Awards Programme was set up with the aim of ameliorating the outlook for survival of species in precisely such a precarious state, so we have been happy to have been able to finance two projects, approved in 2015 and 2016, both executed by CORBIDI. As a result of improved information, in 2018 BirdLife International ‘downlisted’ White-winged Guan from Critically Endangered to Endangered (see page 53 of this issue).

9 White-winged Guan *Penelope albipennis*, Quebrada Carrizal, caserío Río Seco, Morropon, Piura, Peru, January 2014 (Elio Nuñez).



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10 White-winged Guan poster, funded by NBC.

11–12 NBC-funded education materials being used in local schools, Peru (Fabiola Riva Melofiro).

Evaluation of information gaps, and environmental education, for White-winged Guan Penelope albipennis in the north of its range. \$1,200. Project dates: March 2016–September 2018.

The project aimed mainly to find new sites for White-winged Guan, following analysis of the species’s distribution and habitat using satellite images. A team of eight volunteers visited six ravines which had been identified as potential new sites. Two of these held a total of 15 birds, and a third site was reported to support seven birds. The most important ravine, En Medio, is seven hours’ walk from the nearest road, but it was worth the trek when researchers found 11 birds.

APPLYING FOR NBC FUNDING

The deadlines for NBC Conservation Award Programme applications are 1 January and 1 July each year. Full details of the Awards Programme and application process can be found at neotropicalbirdclub.org/conservation/conservation-fund/. Without the generous support of independent organisations and private

individuals, the Conservation Awards Programme would be unable to finance so many worthwhile projects. If you or your organisation would like to donate to the programme please contact the authors. With additional funding we will be able to do even more to help local conservationists protect Neotropical birds.

Given the guan's rarity, observers took care to exclude any possibility of double-counting. Despite drawing a blank on the present surveys, Mangamanguilla Private Conservation Area also looks hopeful, with local reports of seven individuals between two ravines. Not far away, Quebrada Carrizal produced four birds.

Elio Ivan Nuñez Cortez

A second outreach campaign for the protection of the Critically Endangered White-winged Guan Penelope albigennis in the Tumbesian region of Peru. \$3,000.

Project dates: August 2016–January 2018.

The first White-winged Guan education and outreach campaign began in 2009, after a socio-economic study in and around the species' range. The objective was to work directly with communities living next to White-winged Guans to raise awareness of the plight of the species. Since then, there have been several campaigns, the second of which was supported by a NBC Conservation Award.

The grant was used in three parts. An initial outlay covered the cost of reprinting a poster and stickers using a painting by Dan Lane, a Louisiana State University researcher with a long history of work in Peru, and of broadcasting bulletins on local radio stations. The bulk of the funds enabled fieldworkers to disseminate information in 43 villages and population centres close to known White-winged Guan habitat in Piura, Lambayeque and Cajamarca regions. Subsequently, in late 2017, the team measured people's knowledge of the bird and its conservation, in order to determine whether or not the campaigns have been effective.

Local knowledge and awareness of the species continues to increase, but there remain places where people do not know that the guan is threatened and protected by law. In a few places, local residents continue to take eggs and hunt the birds themselves. However, unlike previous campaigns, local residents

themselves warned their neighbours about the threats to the species' survival and persuaded them that such behaviour is no longer acceptable.

The education and awareness-raising process continues. Further funds and support are required to increase the length of visits, and to make educational materials for local school teachers, as well as to strengthen relations with local authorities and the police. All project material can be found at neotropicalbirdclub.org/corbidi.org/educacion-ambiental.html.

Fabiola Riva Melofiro

CHRISTOPHER J. SHARPE & ROB CLAY

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Opportunities to help the Club

Do you live near to Rutland Water, UK, and have space (such as an attic) where we might store display material for the Club's stand at the British Birdwatching Fair (Birdfair)? From time to time we need volunteers to take on roles for the Club. These are not trustee positions so do not involve joining Council or attending Council meetings. We are particularly keen to find people with knowledge of web-editing, marketing or database management. In each case, if you are keen to help or learn more, please e-mail ✉ secretary@neotropicalbirdclub.org.