

Documented records of White-cheeked Tody-Tyrant *Poecilatriccus albifacies* from Acre, Brazil

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SUMMARY.—We summarise the history and currently understood distribution of White-cheeked Tody-Tyrant *Poecilatriccus albifacies* and provide documentation regarding two records of the species from Acre, Brazil. These records, one of which refers to a male found and photographed by the authors, and the other of which involved a pair collected in 1998, are the first documented records for Brazil. In discussing these records, we examine the association between *P. albifacies* and bamboo-dominated habitats, and reassess the likely status of the species in Brazil.

White-cheeked Tody-Tyrant *Poecilatriccus albifacies* is a distinctive, sexually dimorphic tyrannid with a localised distribution in upper Amazonia. Described as *Todirostrum albifacies* by E. R. Blake (1959) from a single specimen collected on the left bank of the Boca del río Colorado, dpto. Madre de Dios, Peru, it remained essentially unknown until rediscovered at Explorer's Inn (Tambopata Reserve), dpto. Madre de Dios, Peru, on 19 August 1979, by T. A. Parker (Parker 1982). Parker (1982) provided the first published observations on the natural history and vocalisations of *P. albifacies*, and also reported on unpublished specimens collected by J. W. Fitzpatrick and M. B. Robbins. Parker (1982: 488) noted that *P. albifacies* seemed to be 'entirely restricted to *Guadua* bamboo', a habitat association that has subsequently been documented by many researchers (e.g. Kratter 1997, Fitzpatrick *et al.* 2004).

In the intervening years, *P. albifacies* has been found at several additional localities, but until recently, it was considered endemic to the Southeast Peruvian Lowlands Endemic Bird Area (EBA), with all published records being from southern dpto. Madre de Dios, and north-eastern dpto. Cusco, in south-east Peru (Fitzpatrick *et al.* 2004). Tobias & Seddon (2007) reported the first confirmed record from Bolivia, a pair, the male of which was photographed and sound-recorded, in *Guadua* bamboo at Extrema, dpto. Pando, in November 2004. Tobias & Seddon (2007) noted that Extrema was c.20 km from the nearest known Peruvian locality for *P. albifacies*, and therefore, the species' presence in Bolivia was not unexpected. However, they also noted that a three-day search of similar habitat across a wider area in the Extrema region failed to yield additional records of *P. albifacies*, nor did more intensive field work by other researchers (Alverson *et al.* 2000) at three sites (some with extensive bamboo) slightly further downstream along the ríos Tahuamanu and Muyumanu in dpto. Pando.

In this paper, we report on two records of *P. albifacies* from Brazil, one quite recent, and the other, an unpublished and seemingly overlooked record from more than a decade ago. Collectively, these two records provide the first substantiated evidence of the occurrence of *P. albifacies* in Brazil.

Results

On 3 September 2009 EG was escorting KJZ and AW at the Parque Zoobotânico (09°57'S, 67°57'W; 250 m), a field station managed by the Universidade Federal do Acre (UFAC),



Figures 1–3. Male White-cheeked Tody-Tyrant *Poecilotriccus albifacies*, UFAC Parque Zoobotânico, Rio Branco, Acre, Brazil, 3 September 2009 (Kevin J. Zimmer)

Figure 4. Male (left; MZUSP 80226) and female (right; MZUSP 80227) White-cheeked Tody-Tyrants *Poecilotriccus albifacies*, collected in the FLONA de Macaúá, Acre, Brazil, in March 1998 by Paulo Martuscelli, and deposited at the Museu de Zoologia da Universidade de São Paulo (MZUSP), São Paulo, Brazil (Kevin J. Zimmer)

within the suburban limits of Rio Branco, the capital of the state of Acre. This site comprises c.100 ha of humid lowland forest with extensive *Guadua* bamboo (Guilherme 2001, Tobias *et al.* 2008). While tape-recording a Bamboo Antshrike *Cymbilaimus sanctamariae* in one such stand of *Guadua* in mid-morning, we heard a different vocalisation coming from the canopy of the bamboo. The vocalisation, which was delivered at well-spaced intervals of up to 15 seconds, was a series of 7–10 emphatic, *pip* or *pup* notes (with a distinctive, ‘popping’ quality) that accelerated after an initial pause between the first and second notes. KJZ recognised the voice, from previous field experience in Peru, as being that of *Poecilotriccus albifacies*. AW & KJZ immediately began tape-recording the bird, which went silent after a few minutes. After a few seconds of playback, AW spotted a small bird c.15 m above ground in a vine tangle in the central portion of an emergent tree, and visually confirmed that it was a male White-cheeked Tody-Tyrant. Additional playback stimulated the bird to drop much lower, into the bamboo understorey, where all three of us obtained identifiable photographs (Figs. 1–3). The bird responded to playback by giving additional songs similar or identical to those given spontaneously. It also gave a low-amplitude series of run-together grating notes as apparent agonistic calls. The bird behaved in a highly territorial manner, and remained in the general vicinity, alternating bouts of vocalising with periods of foraging for the next few hours. During this time, it foraged everywhere from 1.5–12.0 m above the ground, mostly within crowns of the bamboo, but also in the more open understorey of the bamboo, as well as in vine tangles along trunks and interior portions of major limbs of emergent trees. Virtually all foraging manoeuvres observed were short, darting, upward sally-gleans to the undersides of foliage (mostly bamboo leaves), stems, or vines. At no time did we see or hear a second bird. KJZ and AW re-visited the site again on the mornings of 5 and 13 September and did not hear or see *P. albifacies*, although they did not employ audio playback again. As of January 2010, EG had not relocated *P. albifacies* at the Parque Zoobotânico.

Discussion

Our record from UFAC is only the second for Brazil. The first Brazilian record was a presumably mated pair that was mist-netted and collected by PM in March 1998, in Ombrophylous Forest dominated by arborescent bamboo in the Floresta Nacional do Macauã, near the rio Macauã, in the Sena Madureira district of central Acre (09°52'S, 69°23'W). The specimens, a male (MZUSP 80226) and female (MZUSP 80227), are held at the Museu de Zoologia da Universidade de São Paulo, São Paulo (MZUSP). KJZ & AW examined and photographed (Fig. 4) these specimens in August 2008. We have no further information regarding this record, nor do we know if other researchers have visited this site with the focus of re-finding *P. albifacies*. Because no details regarding the FLONA Macauã specimens had yet been published, the Comitê Brasileiro de Registros Ornitológicos (CBRO), in their official Lista das aves do Brasil (versão 15/10/2008), relegated *P. albifacies* to their Secondary List of Brazilian birds (J. F. Pacheco pers. comm.). According to CBRO criteria, species on the Secondary List are considered to be of ‘probable occurrence in Brazil, provided with specific records published for the country, but whose documental evidence is not known or available.’ In this case, the occurrence of *P. albifacies* in Brazil was published in Sigris (2009), but that source did not indicate if the basis for inclusion was a sight record or a specimen record. The two records of *P. albifacies* documented herein, should now move that species to the Primary List of Brazilian birds.

The strong association between many species of south-west Amazonian birds and bamboos of the genus *Guadua* has been discussed and documented by many workers (e.g. Parker 1982, Pierpont & Fitzpatrick 1983, Terborgh *et al.* 1984, Fitzpatrick & Willard 1990, Kratter 1997). Most of this work has been focused in Peru, although more recently,

researchers have documented the occurrence of a similar, but slightly less diverse community of 'bamboo birds' in Bolivia (Parker & Remsen 1987, Alverson *et al.* 2000, Tobias & Seddon 2007, Tobias *et al.* 2008) and Brazil (Parker *et al.* 1997, Zimmer *et al.* 1997, Whittaker & Oren 1999). In Brazil, much of the early focus on bamboo-inhabiting bird communities was directed at south-east Amazonia, in Rondônia, northern Mato Grosso, and southern Pará, where the distribution of *Guadua* is patchier and less extensive than in south-west Amazonia (Parker *et al.* 1997). Investigations directed at these bamboo communities produced numerous significant range extensions for bamboo specialist birds previously thought to be restricted to western Amazonia (Parker *et al.* 1997, Zimmer *et al.* 1997, Aleixo *et al.* 2000). Interestingly, *P. albifacies* is replaced at some of these eastern Amazonian sites by its presumed sister species, Black-and-white Tody-Tyrant *P. capitalis*, which occurs in both bamboo and non-bamboo habitats (Parker *et al.* 1997).

EG, A. Aleixo and M. P. D. Santos have undertaken recent research focused on bamboo-inhabiting birds at several sites in Acre (Guilherme 2001, Tobias *et al.* 2008, Guilherme & Santos 2009), including the UFAC Parque Zoobotânico, where EG has conducted an ongoing, long-term survey initiated in 1998 (Guilherme 2001). These surveys have documented a diverse bamboo avifauna in Acre that includes almost all of the 29 species identified by Stotz *et al.* (1996: 419) as being indicator species of bamboo stands in the Southern Amazonia zoogeographic region; 17 of the 19 species classified by Kratter (1997) as being 'bamboo specialists' along the río Tambopata in dpto. Madre de Dios, Peru; and, the recently described Rufous Twistwing *Cnipodectes superrufus* (Tobias *et al.* 2008, Guilherme & Santos 2009).

The inability of these surveys, and earlier ones (1991, 1992 and 1994–95) by AW along the upper rio Juruá, to find *P. albifacies*, despite their focus on bamboo habitats and the relative abundance of those habitats in the state of Acre, suggests that *P. albifacies* is a genuinely rare and patchily distributed member of Brazil's bamboo avifauna, and not just overlooked. Similarly, Tobias & Seddon (2007) suggested that the species ranges only marginally into Bolivia. Even within the centre of its distribution in south-east Peru, *P. albifacies* is considered 'uncommon and very local' (Fitzpatrick *et al.* 2004). This is in stark contrast to most bamboo specialists, which, at least locally, tend to occur in higher densities than most forest species in Amazonia (pers. obs.). A parallel situation might be found in the case of the Rufous Twistwing, which has a wide, but seemingly patchy distribution in south-west Amazonia (in Peru, Bolivia and Brazil), and which is generally scarce and difficult to relocate at some known sites (Tobias *et al.* 2008). It too, is replaced to the north and east in Amazonia by a more widespread sister species (Brownish Twistwing *Cnipodectes subbrunneus*) that is not restricted to bamboo habitats.

This said, *P. albifacies* is, perhaps, more likely to be overlooked than most bamboo specialists. It is a small flycatcher that spends most of its time in the densely foliated upper layers of bamboo stands and vine tangles, and its vocalisations, although distinctive once learned, are not particularly loud, and are somewhat similar to those of the more common and widespread Flammulated Pygmy Tyrant *Hemitriccus flammulatus*. Surveys that rely heavily on mist-netting as a sampling technique will likely miss or under-sample *P. albifacies* even when it is present.

Our record of *P. albifacies*, along with the recent discovery of Rufous Twistwing at multiple sites in Acre (Tobias *et al.* 2008, Guilherme & Santos 2009), underscores the need for further investigation and conservation of the diverse bamboo avifauna of Acre, Brazil.

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