

Some new information on the distribution of Venezuelan birds

Peter Boesman

Como resultado de la observación de aves en el campo durante los últimos 10 años, se presenta un resumen de nuevos datos de distribución de aves en Venezuela. Los datos están organizados por área (20 en total) la mayoría de las áreas son poco conocidas. Las observaciones de mayor importancia se detallan en appendix 1. En Falcón, la Serranía de San Luis tiene muchas más especies típicas de las alturas subtropicales de la Cordillera de la Costa que previamente conocido, las serranías en el noreste de Falcón, de alturas bajas, tienen una avifauna abundante de especies de selva tropical, y áreas de agua dulce en esta misma parte de Falcón y el norte de Carabobo son un refugio para muchas especies acuáticas poco conocidas. Los Andes en Lara y Trujillo no han sido estudiados tan profundamente como en Mérida, y por consecuencia se han descubierto importantes extensiones en la distribución de varias especies. En Mérida, se documenta indicaciones de una ruta migratoria muy importante a través del Valle del Río Santo Domingo. Las alturas bajas del Parque Nacional Tamá en Táchira (en el valle de los ríos Frío y Negro) y las áreas adyacentes en Apure merecen mayor investigación en vista de algunas observaciones sorprendentes. Igualmente, los descubrimientos en islas del Río Orinoco fueron inesperados. La selva del Río Caura en el norte de Bolívar alberga especies previamente conocidas solamente del estado de Amazonas, y la región del Río Grande en el noreste de Bolívar tiene una avifauna típicamente Guyanesa. Podemos concluir que nuestro conocimiento de la distribución de aves en Venezuela todavía es muy incompleta. Queda demostrado que hasta investigaciones mínimas pueden descubrir nueva información y esperamos que esta publicación motive acelerar la investigación de aves en este país.

Introduction

In the early 1980s, the Venezuelan avifauna was probably the best known in tropical South America, principally due to the impressive work of W. H. Phelps and W. H. Phelps Jr. Since then, and possibly in consequence, comparatively little fieldwork has been undertaken and the attention of Neotropical ornithologists has focused on the less well-known avifaunas of, for example Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia and Brazil. With continuing research in these countries, it would seem that Venezuela is quickly losing its status as having one of the better known tropical avifaunas. One example: if one examines which country has the greatest number of unknown or little-known antbirds, one of the characteristic Neotropical bird families, the answer, at present, would probably be Venezuela, with Caura Antbird *Percnostola caurensis*, Yapacaná Antbird *Myrmeciza (?) disjuncta*, Grey-bellied Antbird *M. pelzelni*, Recurve-billed Bushbird *Clytoctantes alixii*, Great Antpitta *Grallaria excelsa*, Táchira Antpitta *G. chthonia*, Scallop-breasted Antpitta *Grallaricula loricata* and Hooded Antpitta *G. cucullata*, amongst others, all virtually unknown in the field.

After 10 years of fieldwork in Venezuela (the last seven years as a resident), I can confirm that

there is still much to be discovered. Amazingly, an experienced observer travelling to almost any part of Venezuela will return with new information, whether it be on distribution, migration, vocalisations, identification or behaviour. Thus, I have been able to compile much new information on Venezuelan birds.

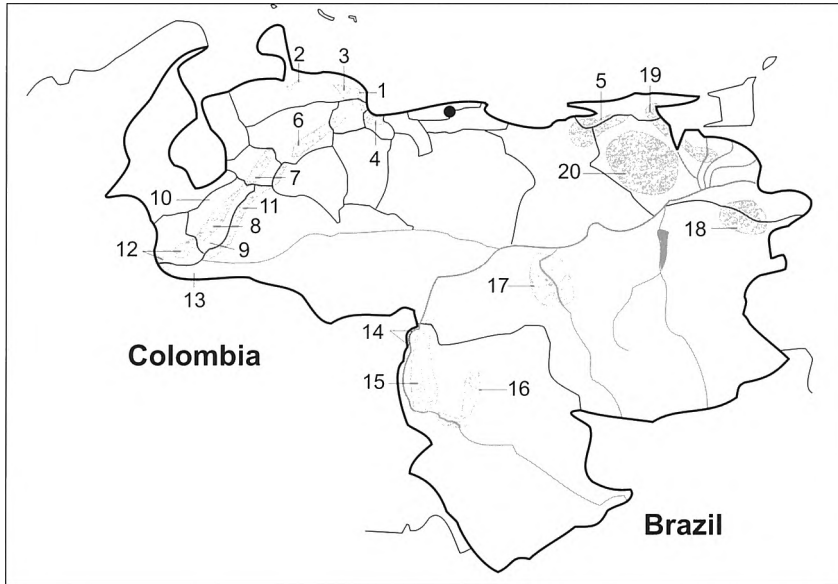
The scope of this paper is to summarise new information on distribution. I hope it will motivate ornithologists to refocus on Venezuela and advance further studies of its avifauna.

Data presentation

Through observations in areas covering much of Venezuela, I compiled over 1,000 'elements' of new distributional information (for c.400 species), each representing a dot on the blank part of a species' distribution map (in the broad sense of a three-dimensional map including altitudinal limits). 'New' data is defined as that not published in Meyer de Schauensee & Phelps¹³. Rather than presenting a long list in systematic order including all new records, their date, locality and some comments, I treat this new material by geographical area and habitat, looking for those areas where most records are concentrated, whilst trying to identify relationships and provide explanations. These areas are



- Top left Andean Cock-of-the-Rock (male), San Isidro road, Barinas. (Peter Boesman)
- Top right Andean Cock-of-the-Rock (female), San Isidro road, Barinas. (Peter Boesman)
- Middle left Spot-crowned Woodcreeper, Yacambú, Lara. (Peter Boesman)
- Middle right Immaculate Antbird (male), San Isidro road, Barinas. (Peter Boesman)
- Left Black-and-chestnut Eagle (immature), San Isidro road, Barinas. (Peter Boesman)



Map 1. Venezuela. The sites and numbers correspond to the numbered sections in the text.

mostly little-known. Map 1 pinpoints the geographical areas treated. For the most important range extensions, additional details are presented in Appendix 1. Map 2 identifies some little-known areas in north-west Venezuela (bird records in the text are linked to sites on this map by means of superscript letters). As an indication of how much can be discovered even from one visit, the number of visits and total number of days I have spent in each area is presented in brackets, following which a brief description of the area is given together with the most interesting observations (from a distributional viewpoint). Some records were made by other observers. If the original observer is known, they are mentioned, but this has not always been possible. I am sure the late P. Schwartz, C. Parrish, A. Altman, P. Alden, Mary Lou Goodwin, Steve Hilty and guides from companies such as Field Guides Inc. and Victor Emanuel Nature Tours, are among the first observers for several records listed. By acknowledging these observers here, I hope credit for the records will be considered as being shared by all.

As a final note, I would like to mention that new state records are not included, as these are of little ornithological significance, unless they are also new to a specific geographical area or represent an important range extension. For instance, during a visit to the Piacoa road in southern Delta Amacuro more than 10 species new to the state were found. Most, however, were common in Sierra de Imataca, north-east Bolívar, which just crosses

the state border and reaches its northernmost limit here. Similarly, the well-known Soledad and San Isidro roads, north-west Barinas, lie in the Andean lower Santo Domingo valley, and have produced a long list of first records for this typical llanos state.

1. Inland wetlands of north-east Falcón and north Carabobo (18 visits, 23 days)

The saltwater and brackish coastal wetlands of north-east Falcón are well known (e.g. Morrocoy National Park). Less known are the many freshwater bodies away from the coast, which principally receive their water from the Yaracuy and Tocuyo rivers. The largest I have visited with some regularity are Tacarigua lake, the wet plains bordering Serranía de la Misión and San Pablo marsh. Records of the following species are of distributional interest: Pied-billed Grebe *Podilymbus podiceps*^a, Anhinga *Anhinga anhinga*^{a,f,g}, Stripe-backed Bittern *Ixobrychus involucris*^{a,f}, Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus*^{a,b}, Horned Screamer *Anhima cornuta*^{a,b,f}, Brazilian Duck *Amazonetta brasiliensis*^a, Rusty-flanked Crake *Laterallus levraudi*^{a,b,f,g} (four sites⁷), Moorhen *Gallinula chloropus*^a, Caribbean Coot *Fulica caribaea*^{a,g}, and Pale-legged Hornero *Furnarius leucopus*^{a,b,d,f} (common in east Falcón as far as San Pablo, Carabobo, the easternmost record). Several of the waterbird species are quite common, illustrating the lack of fieldwork in this area prior to the 1980s. For species lists for three sites in this area, see^{5,6}.



La Soledad Trail, Barinas (Peter Boesman)

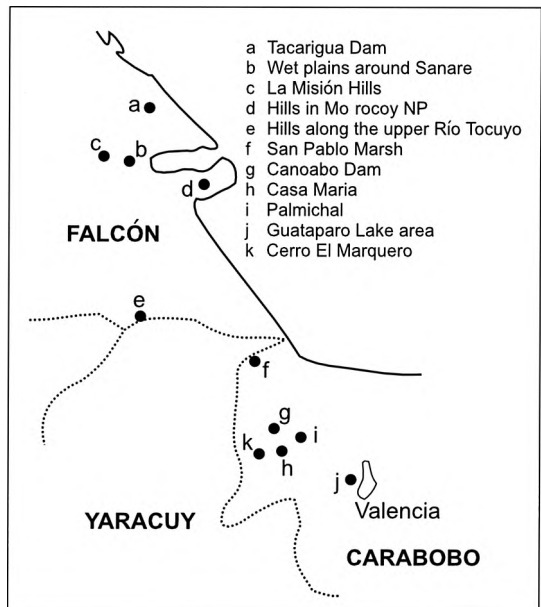
2. Sierra de San Luis (2,5)

This mountain range in central north-west Falcón reaches 1,700 m and upper elevations are covered in subtropical forest, in extreme contrast to the dry areas surrounding it. Although it cannot be compared to Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, Colombia (the highest mountain range adjacent to the sea in the world), some endemic taxa might be expected. Additionally, the area is approximately equidistant from the Coastal Cordillera and the Venezuelan Andes, and affinities with both were also to be expected. Limited collections were made by Phelps, which resulted in a few interesting discoveries, e.g. Brown Tinamou *Crypturellus obsoletus cerviniventris* and Long-tailed Antbird *Drymophila caudata*, both species suggesting a closer relationship with the Coastal Cordillera.

My fieldwork confirmed the continued presence of the tinamou and antbird and, in addition, the following species were found, some representing quite important range extensions: Guttulated Foliage-gleaner *Syndactyla guttulata* (previously considered endemic to the Coastal Cordillera; one was tape-recorded, thus satisfactorily excluding Lineated Foliage-gleaner *S. subalaris*, its Andean counterpart), Buff-fronted Foliage-gleaner *Philydor rufus*, Venezuelan Antvireo *Thamnomanes leucostictus* *tucuyensis*, Plain Antvireo *Dysithamnus mentalis*, Great Antshrike *Taraba*

major, Short-tailed Antthrush *Chamaeza campanisona*, Rusty-breasted Antpitta *Grallaria ferrugineipectus*, Bright-rumped Attila *Attila spadiceus*, Yellow-olive Flycatcher *Tolmomyias sulphureus*, Mountain Elaenia *Elaenia frantzii*, Southern Nightingale-wren *Microcerculus marginatus* and Andean Solitaire *Myadestes ralloides*. Several of these species occur in the Coastal Cordillera and not the Venezuelan Andes, confirming the sierra's apparently closer relationship to the former range. This suggests that the main reason for the limited distribution of the Coastal Cordilleran endemics is that they require a specific habitat only available in montane areas near the coast, and not found in the north Venezuelan Andes.

In the dry northern foothills of the Sierra de San Luis, the avifauna is very different, one interesting discovery being a small roost of the globally threatened Yellow-shouldered Parrot *Amazona barbadensis*. Surprisingly, this area has received virtually no ornithological attention in recent decades. Much subtropical forest has already been converted into coffee plantations, including many places within the land declared a national park. Although the area is an important watershed for the city of Coro, the remaining subtropical forest would appear to be threatened by the same fate. Further research may assist in reasserting the reasons for protecting this very interesting area.



Map 2. North-west Venezuela.

3. Coastal hills of north-east Falcón (7,8)

Interior north-east Falcón possesses several foothill areas which hold very humid tropical forest. From west to east, they are the Mirimire hills, La Misión hills and Yaracuy hills. Although I visited the latter, I concentrated on La Misión hills, including those on the drier peninsula in Morrocoy National Park. Their maximum elevation is a mere 150 m.

The following observations represent range-extensions: Grey Tinamou *Tinamus tao*^f, Grey-headed Kite *Leptodon cayanensis*^d, White Hawk *Leucopternis albicollis*^e, Barred Forest-falcon *Micrastur ruficollis*^e, Lilac-tailed Parrotlet *Touit batavica*^c (recorded by Howard Laidlaw), Spectacled Owl *Pulsatrix perspicillata*^a, Rufous Nightjar *Caprimulgus rufus*^d, Little Hermit *Phaethornis longuemareus*^c, Blue-crowned Motmot *Momotus momota*^d, Red-billed Scythebill *Campylorhamphus trochilirostris*^{c,d}, Rufous-winged Antwren *Herpsilochmus rufimarginatus*^{d,e}, Sooty-headed Tyrannulet *Phyllomyias griseiceps*^c, Short-tailed Pygmy-tyrant *Myiornis ecaudatus*^c (a range-extension of c.500 km and indicating that it may also occur in the foothills of the eastern Andes of Venezuela), Pale-eyed Pygmy-tyrant *Atalotriccus pilaris*^d, Slate-headed Tody-flycatcher *Todirostrum sylvia*^c, Thrush-like Schiffornis *Schiffornis turdinus*^c, Bright-rumped Attila *Attila spadiceus*^c, Black-crowned Tityra *Tityra inquisitor*^c, Southern Nightingale-wren *Microcerculus marginatus*^c and Rosy Thrush-tanager *Rhodinocichla rosea*^d.

The presence of species such as Grey Tinamou, Barred Forest-falcon and Rusty-breasted Antpitta, which normally occur in the upper tropical and subtropical zones, provides an interesting illustration of the altitudinal compression (Massenerhebung) effect in coastal humid hills. This has been described for the mountains of the Paria peninsula⁸, but is equally true of this area.

Finally, several small ponds in this area provide excellent habitat for the threatened Rusty-flanked Crake *Laterallus levraudi*^{i,7}.

Deforestation for agriculture is continuing apace and unfortunately the main forested area lacks protection. La Misión hills together with the adjacent wetlands form a very rich area of c.900 km², in which I have recorded over 400 bird species⁶.

4. Coastal Cordillera, Carabobo (24,33)

The Coastal Cordillera is an Endemic Bird Area (EBA)¹⁶, and subject of much ornithological work, principally around Caracas and in the famous Henri Pittier National Park. However, in Carabobo,

where all habitats of the Cordillera are present (except upper subtropical elevations), research has been rather limited. I have observed c.400 species in the area, including many Coastal Cordillera endemics.

The following observations are of distributional interest: Agami Heron *Agamia agami*, Least Bittern *Ixobrychus exilis*ⁱ, Rusty-flanked Crake *Laterallus levraudi*, Paint-billed Crake *Neocrex erythrops*^h (750 m), Yellow-breasted Crake *Porzana flaviventer*ⁱ (900 m), Caribbean Coot *Fulica caribaea*^g, Sungrebe *Heliornis fulica*, Grey-capped Cuckoo *Coccyzus lansbergi*^g (300 m), Black-and-white Owl *Ciccaba nigrolineata*ⁱ (900 m), Great Potoo *Nyctibius grandis*^h (750 m), Rufous Nightjar *Caprimulgus rufus*ⁱ, Venezuelan Antvireo *Dysithamnus leucostictus*^k (1,150 m), Tawny-crowned Pygmy-tyrant *Euscarthmus meloryphus*^g, Yellow-bellied Bristle-tyrant *Pogonotriccus flaviventris*ⁱ (750 m) and Golden-winged Warbler *Vermivora chrysoptera*^g (300 m). For species lists of four areas in the Coastal Cordillera of Carabobo see^{4,5}.

5. Cordillera de Caripe (9,19)

This EBA has been extensively studied in the past, and to a lesser extent recently³. Apart from the observations of four threatened species (White-tailed Sabrewing *Campylopterus ensipennis*, White-throated Barbtail *Premnoplex tatei*, Grey-headed Warbler *Basileuterus griseiceps* and Venezuelan Flowerpiercer *Diglossa venezuelensis*), the following are of distributional interest (all from the Caripe–Cerro Negro area): Band-tailed Guan *Penelope argyrotis*, Lilac-tailed Parrotlet *Touit batavica*, White-tailed Nightjar *Caprimulgus cayennensis* (1,600 m), White-tipped Swift *Aeronautes montivagus*, Crested Spinetail *Cranioleuca subcristata* and Scaled Antpitta *Grallaria guatemalensis* (an important but relatively unsurprising range extension, as the species occurs on Isla de Margarita and Trinidad).

Furthermore, an interesting wetland—Guamo dam at 550 m—provided the following interesting new distributional records: Caribbean Coot *Fulica caribaea*, White-tailed Goldenthrout *Polytmus gainumbi*, Tawny-headed Swallow *Alopochelidon fucata* and Giant Cowbird *Scaphidura oryzivora*, as well as some interesting records from an elevational standpoint (e.g. Limpkin *Aramus guarauna* and Black Skimmer *Rynchops nigra*).

6. Mountains of east Lara and Yaracuy (6,14)

The mountain ranges of east Lara and Yaracuy, which reach 2,000 m, represent a bridge between



Black Hawk-eagle, Lower Río Caura forest, Bolívar.
(Peter Boesman)

the Venezuelan Andes and Coastal Cordillera, and are thus a very interesting study area. Many Andean species apparently used this bridge to extend into the Coastal Cordillera, other typical Andean species reach their northernmost limit here, and a few endemics of the Coastal Cordillera reach their westernmost limits here (e.g. Blood-eared Parakeet *Pyrhura hoematotis*). At the subspecies level the situation is even more interesting.

Notwithstanding the existence of three protected areas (Yurubi National Park, Terepaima National Park and Yacambú National Park), the area receives little ornithological attention (although Yacambú National Park has recently received some deserved and effective publicity). I concentrated on the latter area, from where the following numerous range extensions come: Anhinga *Anhinga anhinga* (1,400 m), Masked Duck *Oxyura dominica* (1,400 m), Black-crowned Night-heron *Nycticorax nycticorax* (1,400 m), Rusty-flanked Crane *Laterallus levraudi* (1,400m), Caribbean Coot *Fulica caribaea* (1,400m), Blood-eared Parakeet *Pyrhura hoematotis*, Grey-chinned Hermit *Phaethornis griseogularis*, Crested Quetzal *Pharomachrus antisianus*, Spot-crowned Woodcreeper *Lepidocolaptes affinis*, Azara's Spinetail *Synallaxis azarae*, Lineated Foliage-gleaner *Syndactyla subalaris*, Great/Undulated Antpitta *Grallaria excelsalsquamigera* (1,700 m: an Undulated Antpitta-type song which was tape-recorded may prove to be the unrecorded song of Great Antpitta, which is the only one of these two species to have been collected in the area and is known from this elevation), Variegated Bristle-tyrant *Pogonotriccus poecilotis*, Red-ruffed Fruitcrow *Pyroderus scutatus*, White-crowned Manakin *Pipra pipra* (a range extension of some c.500 km: its occurrence here suggests it may occur at subtropical

elevations in the eastern Andes), Golden-faced Tyrannulet *Tyranniscus viridiflavus* (the northernmost record of this species, which has since been observed at several localities in the eastern Andes), Slaty-backed Nightingale-thrush *Catharus fuscater* (common), Fulvous-headed Tanager *Thlypopsis fulviceps*, Oriole Blackbird *Gymnomystax mexicanus* (1,400 m) and Magpie Tanager *Cissopis leveriana*.

Yacambú National Park is also a stronghold of the globally threatened Northern Helmeted Curassow *Pauxi pauxi*, which is commonly heard booming in February–March. For a checklist of Yacambú National Park, see¹⁰.

7. The high Andes of Trujillo and south Lara (4,10)

The Andes in Trujillo reach elevations over 3,000 m and hold large areas of subtropical and temperate forest. I principally focused on Guaramacal National Park, noting the following new occurrences there: Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* (2,200 m), Band-winged Nightjar *Caprimulgus longirostris*, Scaly-naped Amazon *Amazona mercenaria*, Green-fronted Lancebill *Doryfera ludovicicae*, Undulated/Great Antpitta *Grallaria excelsa/squamigera* (see above), Grey-naped Antpitta *Grallaria griseonucha* (recorded by Howard Laidlaw), Slate-crowned Antpitta *Grallaricula nana* (2,300 m), Barred Becard *Pachyramphus versicolor*, Rufous-crowned Pygmy-tyrant *Poecilotriccus ruficeps* (formerly known only from south of the Táchira gap, a 400 km range extension) and Pale-footed Swallow *Notiochelidon flavipes* (a species only recently discovered in Venezuela^{11,14}).

More recently, I explored temperate forest within the Dinira National Park on the Lara/Trujillo border (09°42'N 70°03'W)—one of the northernmost areas of temperate forest in the Venezuelan Cordillera de los Andes. Many high Andean species reach their northern limit here. The most remarkable observations were: Andean Snipe *Chubbia jamesoni* (2,500 m), Short-tailed Nighthawk *Lurocalis (semitorquatus) rufiventris*, White-tipped Swift *Aeronautes montivagus*, White-capped Parrot *Pionus seniloides* and Pale-footed Swallow *N. flavipes* (see above; this is the northernmost record). Further investigation of these areas is highly recommended.

8. The high Andes of Mérida (7,22)

The temperate and páramo habitats in the state of Mérida are well-known endemic areas, and the occurrence of resident birds has been well documented. Less known are movements of birds

through this area. I have visited the upper Santo Domingo valley many times and recorded the following movements of interest.

a) Breeding birds

Several species perform seasonal movements, e.g. Sword-billed Hummingbird *Ensifera ensifera* and Bearded Helmetcrest *Oxyopogon guerinii*, both of which are usually only present in the rainy season (May–November).

b) Spring movements of northern migrants

In (the northern) spring, the Santo Domingo valley acts as an important migration route. In adverse weather conditions, huge numbers of passerine migrants may be forced down at very high elevations. The following species have been recorded: Blue-winged Teal *Anas dicors* (3,500 m), Merlin *Falco columbarius* (3,000 m), Solitary Sandpiper *Tringa solitaria* (3,500 m), Yellow-billed Cuckoo *Coccyzus americanus*, Western Wood-pewee *Contopus sordidulus*, Black-whiskered Vireo *Vireo altiloquus* (breeds in the Caribbean), Red-eyed Vireo *V. olivaceus*, Tennessee Warbler *Vermivora peregrina*, Yellow Warbler *Dendroica petechia*, Mourning Warbler *Oporornis philadelphia*, Connecticut Warbler *O. agilis*, Blackpoll Warbler *Dendroica striata* (all at 2,900–3,000 m), American Redstart *Setophaga ruticilla* (recorded to 3,500 m), Bobolink *Dolichonyx oryzivorus* (4,000 m).

c) Movements of birds from the lowlands

Equally interesting are those species which apparently follow the Santo Domingo valley from the lowlands, reaching elevations above their normal distribution. It is unclear if some of these represent colonisation, due to continuing deforestation, or if they are post-breeding or wandering movements. Each case should probably be considered



Bearded Bellbird (female/immature), Caño Colorado, Monagas. (Peter Boesman)

separately. The following species were observed above their normal elevational limit: Least Grebe *Podiceps dominicus* (2,200 m, and apparently wintering in this area), Pied-billed Grebe *Podilymbus podiceps* (3,500 m), Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* (3,500 m), Great Egret *Egretta alba* (3,000 m), Olivaceous Cormorant *Phalacrocorax olivaceus* (3,500 m), Bare-faced Ibis *Phimosus infuscatus* (3,000 m), White-tailed Kite *Elanus leucurus* (2,100 m), American Kestrel *Falco sparverius* (3,500 m), Southern Lapwing *Vanellus chilensis* (2,100 m), Eared Dove *Zenaida auriculata* (3,700 m) and Tropical Kingbird *Tyrannus melancholicus* (3,000 m).

d) Vagrants

Some vagrants have been recorded, e.g. Lesser Scaup *Aythya affinis* (3,500 m).

9. The subtropical eastern slope of the Andes (7,15)

Subtropical elevations on the eastern slope of the Andes extend for c.500 km, from the Táchira gap in the south to the Lara and Yaracuy mountains (see above) in the north. Surprisingly, this large area can only be penetrated in a few places, the best known of which is the lower Santo Domingo valley, approximately in the centre of this region. Two tracks lead to humid subtropical forest. The list of range extensions is large: Red-winged Parrotlet *Touit dilectissima*, Pavonine Cuckoo *Dromococcyx pavoninus*, Lyre-tailed Nightjar *Uropsalis lyra* (1,500 m, also seen at 1,200m in this area by David Ascanio and others), Grey-chinned Hermit *Phaethornis griseogularis*, Tawny-throated Leaf-tosser *Scelerurus mexicanus* (formerly known only from Sierra de Perijá and southern Venezuela), Rufous-rumped Antwren *Terenura callinota* (R. S. Ridgely pers. comm.; formerly known only from Sierra de Perijá), Immaculate Antbird *Myrmeciza immaculata*, Rusty-breasted Antpitta *Grallaricula ferrugineipectus*, Andean Cock-of-the-Rock *Rupicola peruviana* (formerly known only from Táchira until its discovery here in the 1980s), Golden-winged Manakin *Masius chrysopterus*, Cliff Flycatcher *Hirundinea ferruginea* (formerly known only from Sierra de Perijá and south of the Orinoco until its discovery by P. Alden in 1969), Variegated Bristle-tyrant *Pogonotriccus poecilotis* (1,400 m), Spotted Nightingale-thrush *Catharus dryas*, Orange-eared Tanager *Chlorochrysa calliparaea* (a new species for Venezuela when discovered here by Steve Hilty in 1987, a range extension of over 500 km), Subtropical Cacique *Cacicus microrynchus* (formerly only known from Sierra de Perijá) and Louisiana Waterthrush *Seiurus motacilla*.

It is expected that most of these species have a more-or-less continuous distribution along the entire eastern slope but, as already stated, confirmation of this is difficult due to limited access to the area.

10. The subtropical western slope of the Andes (1,3)

Even more poorly known are subtropical elevations in the western Venezuelan Andes. I have only investigated this zone along the Azulita road. Interesting range extensions were as follows: Pavonine Cuckoo *Dromococcyx pavoninus*, Wedge-billed Hummingbird *Schistes geoffroyi*, Olivaceous Piculet *Picumnus olivaceus*, Grey-throated Warbler *Basileuterus cinereicollis* (first discovered here by Steve Hilty), Golden-winged Manakin *Masius chrysopterus* (previously only recorded from the eastern slope) and Moustached Brush-finch *Atlapetes albofrenatus* (1,350 m). Further investigation of this zone is urgently required, as no protected areas have been established here.

Steve Hilty and I have been able to tape-record both Grey-throated and White-lored Warblers *Basileuterus conspicillatus* (the latter from the Santa Marta mountains, Colombia). Although White-lored Warbler has been considered closely related (or even a subspecies) of Russet-crowned Warbler *B. coronatus*, its vocalisations are very different from *B. coronatus*, and much closer to Grey-throated Warbler. Furthermore, White-lored Warbler is confined to elevations similar to Grey-throated Warbler, below that of Russet-crowned Warbler (where the species occurs sympatrically with Grey-throated Warbler). I therefore believe that White-lored Warbler is most closely related to Grey-throated Warbler.

11. Eastern slope foothills (4,4)

Foothills along the eastern slope are much less accessible than the higher subtropical elevations and very few accessible areas remain undisturbed. I observed Black-headed Tody-flycatcher *Todirostrum nigriceps* (Barinas, Portuguesa), suggesting occurrence through much of the foothills, and Cocoa Thrush *Turdus fumigatus* (Barinas). I recommend further investigation of the Tucupido Dam area (Portuguesa).

12. Higher elevations in Táchira (1,11)

Higher elevations in Táchira, both north and south of the Táchira gap, were investigated thoroughly by Phelps; more recently several ornithologists have visited the area. Subtropical elevations south of the Táchira gap are particularly interesting, as many

species collected by Phelps (mostly in the Río Chiquito valley) have gone unrecorded since (e.g. Táchira Antpitta *Grallaria chthonia* and Hooded Antpitta *Grallaricula cucullata*). Others, however, have been refound (by Steve Hilty, Bret Whitney and myself independently) in the Río Táchira valley, e.g. Venezuelan Wood-quail *Odontophorus columbianus* and Rufous-breasted Flycatcher *Leptopogon rufipectus*. Additionally, we confirmed the presence of Ashy-headed Tyrannulet *Phyllomyias cinereiceps*, not recorded in Venezuela until its discovery in 1988 by Bret Whitney⁹, and added Variegated Bristle-tyrant *Pogonotriccus poecilotis* and Southern Nightingale-wren *Microcerculus marginatus* (1,800 m).

Other interesting observations from north of the Táchira gap are: Rufous-banded Owl *Ciccaba albitarsus*, Lined Quail-dove *Geotrygon linearis* (2,750 m), Slate-crowned Antpitta *Grallaricula nana* (2,700 and 2,800 m, altitudes similar to those from where it has recently been discovered in the East Andes of Colombia¹), Agile Tit-tyrant *Anairetes agilis* (Páramo del Batallón) and Slaty-backed Hemispingus *Hemispingus goeringi* (Páramo del Batallón, a new site for this threatened endemic).

13. Foothills and lowlands of eastern Táchira and western Apure (1,6)

Whilst higher altitudes of the Andes in Táchira have recently received renewed ornithological attention, the same cannot be said for the foothills and lowlands of eastern Táchira and western Apure. Continued presence of Colombian guerillas in this area is certainly not an incentive to conduct research. However, this is another area of particular interest, as many species of essentially Amazonian distribution reach their northern limits here.

In the east, I visited the eastern San Camillo forest (north of La Victoria). This area has now been almost completely deforested. Of interest was the occurrence of Azure Gallinule *Porphyryla flavirostris*, Cinereous Becard *Pachyramphus rufus* and Cinnamon Attila *Attila cinnamomeus*, the latter a significant range extension.

From the west, I investigated foothills along the Ríos Frío and Negro (part of the Tamá National Park). Important range extensions were as follows: Fasciated Tiger-heron *Tigrisoma fasciatum*, Crimson-rumped Toucanet *Aulacorhynchus haematopygus* (previously known only from Sierra de Perijá). Outside normal elevational limits were: Many-banded Araçari *Pteroglossus pluricinctus* (550 m), Rose-breasted Grosbeak *Pheucticus ludovicianus* (480 m) and Solitary Black Cacique

Cacicus solitarius (450 m). I highly recommend further investigation of this area.

Even further west, in the lower Río Chiquito valley, I recorded Sooty-headed Tyrannulet *Phyllomyias griseiceps* and Yellow-billed Toucanet *Aulacorhynchus calorhynchus* (930 m).

14. Orinoco river islands, Amazonas (1,1)

The small river islands in the Orinoco river, south of Puerto Ayacucho, had apparently received no previous ornithological coverage. These islands consist of rocky boulders and white-sand flats, partially covered with early successional low vegetation (with denser scrub and small trees on some islands, although these appeared less interesting). Visits in June 1996 by Steve Hilty, and by myself in April 1997, discovered the following: Rusty-backed Spinetail *Cranioleuca vulpina*, River Tyrannulet *Serpophaga hypoleuca*, Lesser Wagtail-tyrant *Stigmatura napensis* (the first and second records of this species in Venezuela and the Orinoco basin, c.1,000 km from its previous known range in the Amazon basin, this species was discovered in the early successional vegetation and appeared quite common), Riverside Tyrant *Knipolegus orenocensis*, Orange-headed Tanager *Thlypopsis sordida* and Chestnut-bellied Seedeater *Sporophila castaneiventris* (formerly only known in Venezuela from the Río Negro in the extreme south of the country).

15. Savannas in north-west Amazonas (2,4)

North-west Amazonas has mainly white-sand soil supporting savanna habitat, with the only forested areas being along the many rivers through this area and on patches of red soil. Steve Hilty and I found the following species in a variety of habitats: Red-bellied Macaw *Ara manilata*, Green-tailed Goldenthrout *Polytmus theresiae*, Point-tailed Palmcreeper *Berlepschia rikeri* (which apparently occurs in most areas south of the Orinoco with Moriche palms), White-browed Purpletuft *Iodopleura isabellae*, Dusky-chested Flycatcher *Tyrannopsis luteiventris* and White-bellied Dacnis *Dacnis albiventris*. Most of these records represent only minor range extensions, but suggest that the area had not been thoroughly investigated previously.

16. Sandy-belt forest in Amazonas (1,7)

The only easily accessible site in this region is Junglaven/Camani area¹⁶. I noted the following range extensions during a seven-day visit in November 1993: Blue-and-yellow Macaw *Ara ararauna*, Rufous Nightjar *Caprimulgus rufus*,



Lower Rio Caura forest, Bolivar (Peter Boesman)

White-tailed Goldenthrout *Polytmus guainumbi*, Tawny-tufted Toucanet *Selenidera nattereri*, Brown-breasted Puffbird *Notharchus ordii* (first observed by B. Masters and R. Komuniecki; two pairs of this rare species were found at active nests), Striped Woodcreeper *Xiphorhynchus obsoletus*, Rufous-bellied Antwren *Myrmotherula guttata*, Spot-backed Antwren *Herpsilochmus dorsimaculatus*, Saffron-crested Tyrant-manakin *Neopelma chrysocephalum*, Dusky-chested Flycatcher *Myiodynastes luteiventris*, Citron-bellied Attila *Attila citriniventris*, Cinereous Mourner *Laniocera hypopyrrha*, Pale-bellied Mourner *Rhytipterna immunda* (apparently first recorded in this area by Field Guides Inc., this is another new species for Venezuela), Rufous-crowned Elaenia *Elaenia ruficeps* and Plumbeous Euphonia *Euphonia plumbea*. For a more complete treatment of this area see¹⁶.

17. Caura forest (5,16)

Caura forest is the most northerly forest with essentially an Amazonian avifauna. In consequence, many species reach their northern limit there. Areas visited consisted primarily of *terra firme* forest with patches of riverine forest near the Río Caura. The following observations are of interest: Undulated/Red-legged Tinamou *Crypturellus undulatus/erythropus* (intermediate vocalisations were tape-recorded in humid forest; neither species has previously been recorded in this area), Red-throated Caracara *Daptrius americanus*, Marbled Woodquail *Odontopus gujanensis*, Upland Sandpiper *Bartramia longicauda* (in savanna habitat in the

same area), Black-banded Owl *Ciccaba nigrolineata* (first discovered by C. Parrish), Crested Owl *Lophotrix clamator*, Long-tailed Potoo *Nyctibius aethereus*, Rufous Nightjar *Caprimulgus rufus*, Lesser Swallow-tailed Swift *Panyptila cayennensis*, Black-throated Trogon *Trogon rufus*, Chestnut Woodpecker *Celeus elegans*, Chestnut-crowned Foliage-gleaner *Automolus rufipileatus*, Stipple-throated Wren *Myrmotherula haemotonota*, Grey Antwren *M. menetriesii*, Dot-backed Antbird *Hylophylax punctulata*, Wing-barred Manakin *Piprites chloris*, Dusky-chested Flycatcher *Tyrannopsis luteiventris*, Grey-capped Flycatcher *Myiozetetes granadensis*, Pale-bellied Mourner *Rhytipterna immunda*, Bare-eyed Thrush *Turdus nudigenis*, Tennessee Warbler *Vermivora peregrina*, Plumbeous Euphonia *Euphonia plumbea* and White-vented Euphonia *E. minuta*. I observed c.250 species in forest habitat. The general area holds several other habitat-types with different bird species, making the lower Río Caura area a very rich area deserving real protection.

18. North-east Bolívar (6,20)

The Río Grande area of north-east Bolívar has been extensively visited by many ornithologists in recent decades. Unfortunately, this is an area where deforestation and mining activities, both legal and illegal, have destroyed large areas of primary forest. The area is probably best known for its relatively high density of Harpy Eagle *Harpia harpyja*. Observations of distributional interest are: Capped Heron *Pilherodius pileatus*, Greater Yellow-headed Vulture *Cathartes melambrotus*, White-tailed Kite *Elanus leucurus* (presumably due to deforestation), Slaty-backed Forest-falcon *Micrastur mirandollei*, Sungrebe *Heliornis fulica*, Dusky-billed Parrotlet *Forpus sclateri*, Lilac-tailed Parrotlet *Touit batavica*, Caica Parrot *Pionopsitta caica*, Red-fan Parrot *Deroytus accipitrinus*, Tawny-bellied Screech-owl *Otus watsonii*, Great Potoo *Nyctibius grandis*, Band-rumped Swift *Chaetura spinicauda*, Grey-breasted Sabrewing *Campylopterus largipennis*, Raquet-tailed Coquette *Discosura longicauda*, Paradise Jacamar *Galbula dea*, Cinnamon-throated Woodcreeper *Dendrexetastes rufigula* (a new species for Venezuela when discovered in the late 1970s, although its discovery has not previously been mentioned in the literature), Ferruginous-backed Antbird *Myrmeciza ferruginea*, Pink-throated Becard *Platysaris minor*, White-throated Kingbird *Tyrannus albogularis* (observed with S. Hilty, this is probably the northernmost observation of a probable Austral migrant), Painted Tody-flycatcher

Todirostrum chrysocrotaphum, Short-tailed Pygmy-tyrant *Myiornis ecaudatus*, Violaceous Jay *Cyanocorax violaceus*, Rose-breasted Chat *Granatellus pelzelni*, Turquoise Tanager *Tangara mexicana*, Golden-sided Euphonia *Euphonia cayennensis* and Magpie Tanager *Cissopis leveriana*. This area is still one of the best places in Venezuela to observe Guianan lowland forest species and it can only be hoped that no further logging will take place (although this unfortunately appears unlikely).

19. Várzea forest and wetlands in north-east Venezuela (21,23)

One site, Caño Colorado, has been previously described². Since then, more species have been added to the area's bird list, of which the following are of interest: Black Caracara *Daptrius ater* (in southern Delta Amacuro), Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus*, Hudsonian Godwit *Limosa haemastica* (two locations; north-east Venezuela seems particularly attractive to godwits^{1,2}), Red-bellied Macaw *Ara manilata* and Lineated Woodcreeper *Lepidocolaptes albolineatus*.

20. The Llanos of Monagas (8,8)

Ornithologically there is little difference between the savannas of Monagas and the savannas and llanos habitat of the western llanos states. Still, there are some differences, e.g. I have observed no ibis spp. in Monagas. The following species had not previously been recorded in this area: Comb Duck *Sarkidiornis melanotos* (this species is rather common in the rainy season), Pinnated Bittern *Botaurus pinnatus*, Whistling Heron *Syrigma sibilatrix*, many shorebirds (which are normally considered coastal species) e.g. Short-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus griseus*, Red-bellied *Ara manilata* and Red-shouldered Macaws *A. nobilis*, and Sulphury Flycatcher *Tyrannopsis sulphurea*.



Várzea forest, Junglaven, Amazonas. (Peter Boesman)

Conclusion

As already stated, the above-mentioned areas vary from popular birding sites to localities almost unvisited by ornithologists. Areas also falling into the latter category which I have been unable to visit include: the Sierra de Perijá and lowlands of west Zulia (21), the area south of the Lago Maracaibo basin (22), the foothills of the western Andean slope (23) and southern Amazonas (24). Most of these were visited by Phelps, but by very few, if any, field ornithologists in more recent decades. Knowledge of their avifaunas is based almost entirely on specimens. It is expected that much new information will come in due course from these areas.

Although I have tried to summarise the bulk of my observations by geographical area, several others outside of these areas remain unmentioned, particularly relating to new elevational data. Another category, with many range extensions, are difficult-to-collect species (e.g. water-birds, raptors, swifts and swallows) and for which distributional data in Meyer de Schauensee & Phelps¹³ are rather incomplete. These will be treated in the forthcoming update to the guide of the birds of Venezuela by Steve Hilty, for which all my information has been provided. Anyone requiring additional details of observations mentioned here (for which there are photographs or tape-recordings of many), are invited to request them.

It is clear that in each of the 24 areas mentioned, more thorough investigation will certainly reveal new information, and is therefore highly recommended.

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Peter Boesman

2102 Broken Hill, Van Buren, AR, USA.

Appendix I. Details of the most important records (distance from normal distribution is based on Meyer de Schauensee & Phelps 1978)

Most of these are uncommon. Whenever a species appears to be common this is mentioned. Evidence of tape-recordings/photographs is mentioned.

Pied-billed Grebe	<i>Podilymbus podiceps</i>	Laguna Mucubaji, Mérida, 12 April 1992 at 3,600 m (vs. 0–500 m)
Great Egret	<i>Egretta alba</i>	Los Frailes, Mérida, 2 May 1992, 15 April 1997 at 3,000 m (vs. 0–300m)
Agami Heron	<i>Agamia agami</i>	Cachinche dam, Carabobo, 24 December 1997, few records north of Orinoco
Fasciated Tiger-heron	<i>Tigrisoma fasciatum</i>	Rio Negro, Táchira, 26 December 1996, c.300 km range extension
Least Bittern	<i>Ixobrychus exilis</i>	Caño Colorado, Monagas, 25 August 1994, tape-recorded Lake Guataparo, Carabobo, quite common
Bare-faced Ibis	<i>Phimosus infuscatus</i>	Los Frailes, Mérida, 28 January 1991 at 3,000 m (vs. 0–1,950m)
Lesser Scaup	<i>Aythya affinis</i>	Laguna Mucubaji, Mérida, 1 March 1991 at 3,600 m (vagrant 0–500 m)
Slaty-backed Forest-falcon	<i>Micrastur mirandallei</i>	Rio Grande, Bolivar, 14 February 1994, c.250 km range extension (with H. Laidlaw)
Barred Forest-falcon	<i>Micrastur ruficollis</i>	La Misión, Falcón, 1 February 1997 at 150 m (vs. 1,200–2,500m), tape-recorded
Blue-throated Piping-guan	<i>Pipile pipile</i>	Caño Colorado, Monagas, 29 May 1994, c.250 km range extension (with H. Laidlaw)
Common Gallinule	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>	Yacambú, Lara, common, 1,400 m (vs. 0–500 m), tape-recorded
Caribbean Coot	<i>Fulica caribaea</i>	Breeds in Yacambú, Lara (pulli from March–June), common, 1,400 m (vs. 0–500 m), tape-recorded Tacarigua dam, Falcón, uncommon El Guamo, Monagas, quite common Canoabo dam, Carabobo, uncommon (previously only a few records)
Sungrebe	<i>Heliornis fulica</i>	Cachinche dam, Carabobo, apparently quite common (24 December 1997), c.500 km range extension
Southern Lapwing	<i>Vanellus chilensis</i>	Santo Domingo, Mérida, 2,100 m (vs. 0–1,200 m), quite common
Hudsonian Godwit	<i>Limosa haemastica</i>	Caño Colorado, Monagas, 25 July 1993 Boca de Macareo, Delta Amacuro, 19 October 1994 (only a few records)
Blue-and-yellow Macaw	<i>Ara ararauna</i>	Junglaven, Amazonas, 2 November 1993, c.200 km range extension
Grey-capped Cuckoo	<i>Coccyzus lansbergi</i>	Canoabo dam, Carabobo, 300 m (only a few records)
Pavonine Cuckoo	<i>Dromococcyx pavoninus</i>	San Isidro road, Barinas, generally present in January–March, tape-recorded, vocal pre-dawn La Azulita road, Mérida, 26 February 1995, tape-recorded Previously not mentioned for the Andes
Crested Owl	<i>Lophotrix cristata</i>	Lower Río Caura, Bolivar, common, tape-recorded Previously only known from Táchira
Great Potoo	<i>Nyctibius grandis</i>	Casa Maria, Carabobo, 800 m (vs. 0–300 m), vocal in spring
Lyre-tailed Nightjar	<i>Uropsalis lyra</i>	San Isidro road, Barinas, 21 February 1993, 1,500 m (vs.2,500–3,000 m)
Racquet-tailed Coquette	<i>Discosura longicauda</i>	Rio Grande, Bolivar, 5 August 1988, c.500 km range extension
Crimson-rumped Toucanet	<i>Aulacorhynchus haematopygus</i>	Rio Frio, Táchira, 26 December 1996, c.300 km range extension

Spot-crowned Woodcreeper	<i>Lepidocolaptes affinis</i>	Yacambú, Lara, 15 May 1993, photographed, c.200 km range extension (in between two different subspecies)
Pale-legged Hornero	<i>Furnarius leucopus</i>	San Pablo, Carabobo, several observations, c.300 km range extension (also many observations in between)
Guttulated Foliage-gleaner	<i>Syndactyla gutturala</i>	Sierra San Luis, Falcón, 30 April 1995, tape-recorded, c.150 km range extension
Buff-fronted Foliage-gleaner	<i>Philydor rufus</i>	Sierra San Luis, Falcón, 30 April 1995, c.150 km range extension
Tawny-throated Leaf-tosser	<i>Sclerurus rufigularis</i>	San Isidro, Barinas, several observations, tape-recorded, c.300 km range extension
Great Antshrike	<i>Taraba major</i>	Sierra San Luis, Falcón, 29 April 1995, tape-recorded, c.150 km range extension
Immaculate Antbird	<i>Myrmeciza immaculata</i>	La Soledad and San Isidro, Barinas, quite common, photographed and tape-recorded, c.100 km range extension
Short-tailed Antthrush	<i>Chamaeza campanisomna</i>	Sierra San Luis, Falcón, common, tape-recorded, c.150 km range extension
Scaled Antpitta	<i>Grallaria guatimalensis</i>	Cerro Negro, Monagas, 7 August and 27 August 1994, tape-recorded, c.200 km range-extension
White-crowned Manakin	<i>Pipra pipra</i>	Yacambú, Lara, 3 August 1997, tape-recorded, c.400 km range extension
Saffron-crested Tyrant-manakin	<i>Neopelma chrysocephalum</i>	Junglaven, Amazonas, 1 November 1993, tape-recorded, c.200 km range extension
White-throated Kingbird	<i>Tyrannus albogularis</i>	El Palmar, Bolívar, 1 July 1994 (with S. Hilty), probably southern migrant
Dusky-chested Flycatcher	<i>Tyrannopsis luteiventris</i>	most northern record: lower Río Caura, Bolívar, tape-recorded, c.300 km range extension most western record: near Puerto Ayacucho, Amazonas, tape-recorded, c. 400 km range extension
Bright-rumped Attila	<i>Attila spadiceus</i>	common in Coastal Cordillera, from Falcón to Aragua, tape-recorded, c.200 km range extension
Cinnamon Attila	<i>Attila cinnamomeus</i>	Río Sarare, Apure, 30 December 1996, tape-recorded, c.300 km range extension
Citron-bellied Attila	<i>Attila citriniventris</i>	Junglaven, Amazonas, 3 November 1993, tape-recorded, c.200 km range extension
Rufous-crowned Tody-tyrant	<i>Poecilotriccus ruficeps</i>	Guaramacal, Trujillo, 10 October 1992, c.300 km range extension
Short-tailed Pygmy-tyrant	<i>Myiornis ecaudatus</i>	La Misión, Falcón, 1 February 1997, tape-recorded, c.150 km range extension
Variagated Bristle-tyrant	<i>Phylloscartes poecilotis</i>	Yacambú, Lara, 3 August 1997, c.100 km range extension
Red-eyed Vireo	<i>Vireo olivaceus</i>	Los Frailes, Mérida, 12 April 1997, 3,000 m (vs. 0–1,650 m)
Pale-footed Swallow	<i>Notiochelidon murina</i>	Guaramacal, Trujillo, quite common, tape-recorded, c.100 km range extension Humocaro Alto-Carache, Lara/Trujillo, tape-recorded, c.150 km range extension
Southern Nightingale-wren	<i>Microcerculus marginatus</i>	Sierra San Luis, Falcón, common, tape-recorded, c.150 km range extension
Andean Solitaire	<i>Myadestes ralloides</i>	Sierra San Luis, Falcón, 30 April 1995, tape-recorded, c.150 km range extension
Subtropical Cacicque	<i>Cacicus microrhynchus</i>	San Isidro, Barinas, several observations, tape-recorded, c.250 km range extension
Bobolink	<i>Dolichonyx oryzivorus</i>	Pico El Aguila, Mérida, 2 May 1992, 4,000 m (vs. 0–500 m)
Tennessee Warbler	<i>Vermivora peregrina</i>	Lower Río Caura, Boli var, 2 January 1991, c.400 km range extension
Louisiana Waterthrush	<i>Seiurus motacilla</i>	San Isidro road, Barinas, 27 February 1995, only a few records for Venezuela
Plumbeous Euphonia	<i>Euphonia plumbea</i>	Lower Río Caura, Bolívar, 2 January 1991, c.350 km range extension
Moustached Brush-finch	<i>Atlapetes albofrenatus</i>	La Azulita road, Mérida, 26 February 1995, 1,350 m (vs. 2,100–2,500 m)
Chestnut-bellied Seedeater	<i>Sporophila castaneiventris</i>	Orinoco islands, Amazonas, 29 March 1997, c.400 km range extension