

New and noteworthy bird records from “Área de Reserva para Parque Nacional” San Rafael

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Abstract

Ten new bird records are reported for “Área de Reserva para Parque Nacional” San Rafael in addition to further records of 16 species previously known from very few reports, and previously unpublished details on seven significant older records. The total number of species reported from the park is now 426, making it the most ornitho-diverse protected area in the country.

Key Words: Caazapá department, conservation, Itapúa department, Paraguay

Resumen

Se reportan primeros registros de 10 especies de aves para el “Área de Reserva para Parque Nacional” San Rafael, junto con nuevos registros de 16 especies anteriormente conocidas de pocos reportes, y datos inéditos de 7 registros significantes más antiguos. Se ha registrado un total de 426 especies de aves en San Rafael, representando la reserva con mayor diversidad de aves en el país.

Palabras Claves: Departamento Caazapá, conservación, Departamento Itapúa, Paraguay

At 72,849 ha the “Área de Reserva para Parque Nacional” San Rafael (Departamentos Itapúa and Caazapá) is the second largest block of Upper Paraná Atlantic Forest remaining in eastern Paraguay and widely considered the highest priority for conservation of the endemic Atlantic Forest avifauna in the country (Cartes et al. 2008). The avifauna of the reserve has been well documented (Lowen et al. 1996, Madroño et al. 1997, Smith et al. 2006, Esquivel et al. 2007) yet most field effort in recent years has concentrated on two properties within the park, Estancia Nueva Gambach (Pro Cosara) 26°38'S, 55°39'W and Kanguery (Guyra Reta) 26°30'S, 55°47'W.

Esquivel & Peris (2011) provided the most recent review of the avifauna of the park, listing 416 species as documented within the reserve. Here we provide documentation for ten additional species recorded since then, which take the park total to 426 species, as well as providing details for records of seven species included in Esquivel & Peris (2011) but which had not been reported in the two previous avifaunal reviews of the park (Smith et al. 2006, Esquivel et al. 2007) and for which no previous data has been published. In addition we report further records of 16 species previously known from very few reports in the park.

STUDY AREA

Located in an area of transition between the tall humid forests of the Paraná River basin and the drier, lower forests of the Paraguay River basin, the vegetation of “Área de Reserva para Parque Nacional” San Rafael consists of a mosaic of Upper Paraná Atlantic Forest and Mesopotamian Grasslands. Altitude varies between 100 and 500m asl (higher in the east of the park). Mean annual rainfall is 2100mm, and mean temperature varies from 17-23°C during the year.

The land within the boundaries of the reserve remains privately owned (with the exception of 500 ha recently transferred to the Ministry of the Environment, SEAM) and is shared between 46 different landowners. As a result of this land tenure situation, the official management category of the reserve is unclear, and it remains (since its designation in 1992) as an “Area Reserved for National Park”. Two of the landowners (the Hostettler family at Estancia Nueva Gambach and Guyra Paraguay at Kanguery) have been particularly cooperative with fieldworkers and hence most recent work has focused on these two properties.

The dominant vegetation at Estancia Nueva Gambach is Atlantic Forest, whilst that of Kanguery is principally Atlantic Forest with a smaller area of Mesopotamian Grassland. Though strictly speaking Estancia Nueva Gambach is outside the legally protected area, it forms a continuous and securely protected block of forest in the southern tip of the reserve as well as acting as the seat of operations for the local conservation group Pro Cosara (Pro Cordillera San Rafael). As this property was included by Esquivel & Peris (2011) as within San Rafael we follow that lead here. Taxonomy follows SACC (2015).

New species

These represent new records for the reserve not included in Esquivel & Peris (2011).

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* (Pandionidae) One individual briefly visiting the lake at Estancia Nueva Gambach, 23 October 2012 (PS).

South American Painted Snipe *Nycticryphes semicollaris* (Rostratulidae) One individual flushed on several occasions from the interface of a soybean field and pine plantation at Estancia Nueva Gambach, 12 December 2011 (PS).

Rufous-capped Antshrike *Thamnophilus ruficapillus* (Thamnophilidae) A singing male photographed by Hugo del Castillo, 7 July 2011 at Kanguery and still present during October 2011 (RC).

Correndera Pipit *Anthus correndera* (Motacillidae) The first record of the species in San Rafael was an individual photographed by RC and Jonathan Newman, 25 October 2009 (Fig. 1) at Kanguery. It is the 3rd record for Paraguay and the first since 1924 (Hayes 1995).



Fig. 1. Correndera Pipit *Anthus correndera*, Kanguery, 25 October 2009, Rob Clay.

Straneck's Tyrannulet *Serpophaga griseicapilla* (Tyrannidae) A single bird reported from Kanguery, 7 July 2011 by Hugo del Castillo.

Masked Tityra *Tityra semifasciata* (Tityridae) An adult male photographed at Kanguery, 3 October 2013 (Fig. 2) by PS is the first record of this species in San Rafael. A female was observed at Estancia Nueva Gambach, 1 November 2014 (PS) and another at the same locality on 4 October 2015 (RC).



Fig. 2. Masked Tityra *Tityra semifasciata*, male, Kanguery, 3 October 2013, Paul Smith.

White-banded Mockingbird *Mimus triurus* (Mimidae) One seen at Kanguery, during 20-25 April 2009, by Silvia Centrón and Leticia López, is the first record of the species in San Rafael.

Copper Seedeater *Sporophila bouvreuil* (Thraupidae) Esquivel & Peris (2011) list this species for the park prior to the split proposed by Machado & Silveira (2011) in reference to the white-bellied form now known as Pearly-bellied Seedeater *S. pileata*. However a male of the rusty-bellied *S. bouvreuil* was photographed by PS (Fig. 3) at Kanguery, 6 November 2007 representing the first and only documentation of that species in San Rafael.



Fig. 3. Copper Seedeater *Sporophila bouvreuil*, male, Kanguery, 6 November 2007, Paul Smith.

Plumbeous Seedeater *Sporophila plumbea* (Thraupidae) A singing predefinitive male at Kanguery, 25 October 2009 (RC).

Red-crested Cardinal *Paroaria coronata* An adult at the entrance to Estancia Nueva Gambach, 25 October 2010 (PS and Hugo del Castillo).

Details of new species post 2007

These are records cited without details in Esquivel & Peris (2011) of species that were not listed by Smith et al. (2006) or Esquivel et al. (2007).

Red-and-white Crake *Laterallus leucopyrrhus* (Rallidae) Heard calling from a bromeliad marsh at Estancia Nueva Gambach during October and November 2007 by (PS), an individual was photographed on a camera trap in the same area by during December 2007 by Hans Hostettler who was familiar with the species. There have been numerous additional sight and auditory records in this locality since. The species is also present at Kanguery where it was heard by PS during August 2014 and subsequently seen there by Arne Lesterhuis on 14 September 2014.

Giant Wood Rail *Aramides ypecaha* (Rallidae) An undated camera trap photograph of this species at Estancia Nueva Gambach by Hans Hostettler is the only record of the species in San Rafael.

Spotted Rail *Pardirallus maculatus* (Rallidae) An undated specimen is present in the Procosara collection that was found dead near the bromeliad marsh at Estancia Nueva Gambach by Hans Hostettler.

Sooty Swift *Cypseloides fumigatus* (Apodidae) Listed by Esquivel & Peris (2011) presumably on the basis of two birds seen by Alberto Esquivel at the Salto Tacuapi waterfall in September 2006, though no details provided. Four birds (perhaps two pairs) were seen above the forest at Salto Tacuapi (26°29'S, 55°19'S) on 15 Oct 2011 by RC, Hans Swegen and Benny Lorentzon. The Tacuapi waterfall is adjacent to the eastern edge of the legally defined limits of the San Rafael reserve.

Fork-tailed Woodnymph *Thalurania furcata* Listed by Esquivel & Peris (2011) presumably on the basis of a brief, inconclusive view of a dark male *Thalurania* during June/July 2008 by PS and Alberto Esquivel at Nueva Gambach. A confirmed male was present during April and May 2015 at Nueva Gambach, being seen by various observers and photographed by PS on 21 April 2015 (Fig. 4). The species was seen again at the same locality on 5 October 2015.



Fig. 4. Fork-tailed Woodnymph *Thalurania furcata*, male, Estancia Nueva Gambach, 21 April 2015, Paul Smith.

Blue-tufted Starthroat *Heliomaster furcifer* (Trochilidae) A female feeding at a flowering tree at Estancia Nueva Gambach, 13 September 2008 is the only record to date (PS).

Chotoy Spinetail *Schoeniophylax phryganophilus* (Furnariidae) First reported for San Rafael from Kanguery by Alberto Esquivel and Leticia López, 1 September 2006. There have been several records since from this property.

Significant additional records

Least Grebe *Tachybaptus dominicus* (Podicipedidae) The presence of this species was documented by video during August 2006 (FAUNA Paraguay b: FPAVE93VI) at Estancia Nueva Gambach and a pair were also observed here, 24 September 2006 by PS. Esquivel & Peris (2011) report the species as recorded only once at this locality, but no details of this record are provided.

Least Bittern *Ixobrychus exilis* (Ardeidae) An adult flushed from a bromeliad marsh during grass cutting at Estancia Nueva Gambach, 3 October 2013 is the second record for San Rafael and the first for the property (PS). The first record was an observation at Kanguery, 1 September 2006 by Alberto Esquivel and Leticia López (Clay *et al.* in press).

Black-and-white Hawk-eagle *Spizastur melanoleucus* (Accipitridae) An adult photographed by Hans Hostettler at Estancia Nueva Gambach on 30 March 2015 (Fig. 5) and seen sporadically at the same locality by various observers including PS until 21 April 2015. Only the second record for this locality and the only record of the species in the park in recent years.



Fig. 5. Black-and-white Hawk-eagle *Spizastur melanoleucus*, Estancia Nueva Gambach, 30 March 2015, Hans Hostettler.

Wood Stork *Mycteria americana* (Ciconiidae) This species was listed as a vagrant by Esquivel & Peris (2011) but no information on locality was provided. A single individual was seen at Kanguery by Leticia López, 23 August 2008 and a flock of seven individuals was observed by PS at Estancia Nueva Gambach, 4 December 2012.

Pearly-breasted Cuckoo *Coccyzus euleri* (Cuculidae) Vocalisations of this species were heard at Estancia Nueva Gambach by PS (15 November 2010) and Kanguery (14 November 2010, PS; 16 October 2011, RC) representing the first records of this species for both properties. The species was previously known only from a single record at San Pedro Mi (Esquivel & Peris 2011).

Pheasant Cuckoo *Dromococcyx phasianellus* (Cuculidae) A vocalizing male photographed on the Chachi trail at Estancia Nueva Gambach on 4 October 2015 is the first record for this property (RC, PS). The species was also heard vocalizing on the Tukâ Pakova trail the following day.

Sickle-winged Nightjar *Eleothreptus anomalus* (Caprimulgidae) Observations of a male, 8 August 2013 and various adults, 3 October 2013 represent the first records of this near threatened species for Kanguery and suggest that the property may hold important national populations of this Near Threatened species. These are the first records of the species in San Rafael since specimens were collected at San Pedro Mi during 2000 by the University of Kansas (Esquivel & Peris 2011). The species has since been recorded at Kanguery with some regularity.

Long-tailed Potoo *Nyctibius aethereus* (Nyctibiidae) Previously known only from a single record at San Pedro Mi. The second record for the park was an individual photographed (Fig.6) by PS (and observed by Hugo del Castillo), 26 October 2010 near the community of Cuatro Puentes.

Tawny-browed Owl *Pulsatrix koeniswaldiana* (Strigidae) Esquivel & Peris (2011) report single records of the species from Estancia Nueva Gambach and San Isidro. However the species is now encountered regularly along the Chachi trail at

Estancia Nueva Gambach, and a juvenile was photographed there on 11 January 2015 (Fig. 7) by PS. Video documentation (FAUNA Paraguay 2014c: FPAVE712VI) was obtained near the community of Cuatro Puentes on 26 October 2010 by PS representing a new locality.



Fig. 6. Long-tailed Potoo *Nyctibius aethereus*, Cuatro Puentes, 26 October 2010, Paul Smith.

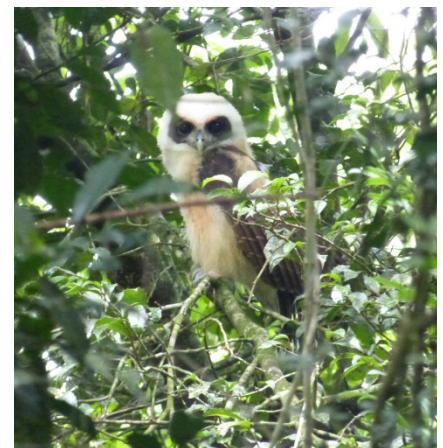


Fig. 7. Tawny-browed Owl *Pulsatrix koeniswaldiana*, juvenile, Estancia Nueva Gambach, 11 January 2015, Paul Smith.



Fig. 8. Eastern Kingbird *Tyrannus tyrannus*, Estancia Nueva Gambach, 15 December 2006, Paul Smith.

Sharp-billed Treehunter *Heliobletus contaminatus* (Furnariidae) An individual was seen mobbing a Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl *Glaucidium brasilianum* on 17 July 2015, a few hundred metres outside the boundaries of Estancia Nueva Gambach, in the extreme south of San Rafael. This species has been rarely recorded in the park and there are no recent records, this being the first report from Estancia Nueva Gambach. Furthermore it is marginally the southernmost record of the species in Paraguay.

Highland Elaenia *Elaenia obscura* (Tyrannidae) Esquivel & Peris (2011) list the species for the park without providing locality data. An individual of this species was observed by PS on the Tukâ Pakova trail at Estancia Nueva Gambach, 28 September 2007 and one was reported from Kanguery, 8 August 2013 by Hugo del Castillo.

Eastern Kingbird *Tyrannus tyrannus* (Tyrannidae) Smith & Wainwright (2006) provided details and photographic documentation (Fig.8) of the species in the park during 11-15 December 2006. Another individual was observed by PS in the same location at Estancia Nueva Gambach, 18 December 2010, suggesting that the species may be more regular in the park than previously thought.

Slaty Thrush *Turdus nigricaps* (Turdidae) Two feeding at a fruiting tree with other thrushes seen by at Estancia Nueva Gambach, 28 September 2007 were the first records for this locality, and another individual was seen at this location, 26 October 2012 (PS) and it was also heard here on 4 October 2015. Esquivel & Peris (2011) record only one previous record from San Rafael at San Pedro Mi.

Blue-and-yellow Tanager *Pipraeidea bonariensis* (Thraupidae) A pair at Estancia Nueva Gambach, 22 October 2012 seen by PS. Esquivel & Peris (2011) list the species only for Estancia Parabel without data on abundance.

Grassland Yellowfinch *Sicalis luteola* (Emberizidae) Several individuals observed by PS (and Hugo del Castillo) at Kanguery, 3 October 2013 are the first records for this property. The species has been seen their regularly since, suggesting breeding may occur.

Green-chinned Euphonia *Euphonia chalybea* (Fringillidae) A female (Fig.9) seen at Estancia Nueva Gambach, 2 May 2013 by PS and photographed by Jon Ashburner is the first record in San Rafael since 1995 (Lowen *et al.* 1997) and the first record of the species on that property.

DISCUSSION

Despite the avifauna of San Rafael being one of the two best-studied of any protected area in Paraguay (Madroño *et al.* 1997, Smith *et al.* 2006, Esquivel *et al.* 2007, Esquivel & Peris 2011) new species continue to be added to the park list with some regularity. Accelerating deforestation in the area around the park has undoubtedly contributed to the addition of at least some open-country species to the park list. On the other hand logistics of access to private land within the park boundaries have resulted in field efforts in recent years being focused repeatedly on the same few properties. This without doubt has unduly biased our current understanding of the status or abundance of some species with more restricted ecological requirements or distributions within the park, and perhaps exaggerated the status of those which happen to occur regularly in these areas. Thus while these properties may qualify as “well-watched” in the contexts of the poorly-studied Paraguayan avifauna, the extrapolation of these results to the entire park, the vast majority of which has been rarely, if ever visited by ornithologists in recent times, is potentially a grave mistake.



Fig. 9. Green-chinned Euphonia *Euphonia chalybea*, female, Estancia Nueva Gambach, 2 May 2013, Jon Ashburner.

Whilst the importance of the park for the conservation of avian biodiversity is beyond debate, a great deal remains to be learnt not just about the microscale ecology and local distribution of the species that inhabit it, but also about the importance of San Rafael for the macroscale ecology of southern Paraguay. Illegal activity within the reserve is now reaching crisis point and attempts at control are meeting with increasing resistance. Under the worst case scenario we are faced with the loss or permanent alteration of this crucial ecological resource in the immediate future, long before we are likely to fully understand its role. The continued addition of new species may be superficially welcomed as further evidence of the great biodiversity it withholds, but it also provides a sobering indicator that a) our knowledge of the avifauna of park is deficient even in this most basal respect; or b) the avifauna of the park is perhaps undergoing some kind of flux resulting from mechanisms that we lack the data to properly interpret.

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Zárate kindly confirmed details regarding the number of landowners and areas and Daniel Espinola helped with coordinates.

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